

# An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Concept of Reconciliation in Romans 5:1-11: Envisioning a Transformative Human Relationship

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AN EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF PAUL'S CONCEPT OF  
RECONCILIATION IN ROMANS 5:1-11: ENVISIONING A TRANSFORMATIVE HUMAN  
RELATIONSHIP

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## **Thesis Statement**

The fundamental premise underlying this work is that in Rom 5:1-11, Paul presents God's reconciliation of humanity with Godself through Jesus' death as both a key expression of God's salvific activity and as the foundation and model of reconciliation among peoples. Contrary to studies which create a dichotomy in Paul's understanding of reconciliation as either a reconciliation between God and humans or a reconciliation among humans themselves, this study presents reconciliation as a key Pauline soteriological expression which has both vertical and horizontal implications with emphasis on how Paul's theology of reconciliation shapes his discourse on God's righteousness and the social relationship of the new people of God, especially in reference to gender and ethnic/racial relationships. While there may be no explicit reference to the horizontal dimension of reconciliation in the text of Rom 5:1-11, it is the task of this study to demonstrate that in the letter to the Romans, horizontal reconciliation presupposes vertical reconciliation and both are inseparable. Among ndi Igbo, the perennial cultural practice of inequality and the subordination of persons because of ethnicity/class (Osu Caste System) and gender (discrimination and subordination of women) are among the major causes of disaffections that breed tensions, conflicts, and division within the community. This study proposes that embodying Paul's ethics of vertical and horizontal reconciliation by the Igbo Christian communities can go a long way towards enhancing social and cultural transformation that can lead to peaceful interpersonal relationships and a just Christian community.

## **Background of Study and Statement of Problem**

The theme of Paul's theology of reconciliation received considerable scholarly attention after World War II and has gradually become a catchphrase for many Pauline scholars since the 1990s. It is not difficult to see the reason behind this renewed interest in reconciliation among

contemporary men and women: we live in a world that is becoming progressively fragmented as a result of hatred, violence, racism, classism, sexism, fanatical nationalism, etc. We live in an era that is marred by an accelerating number of political, cultural, and religious conflicts which culminate in various broken human relationships. Hence the renewed emphasis for a theology of reconciliation as a means of overcoming the growing tensions and conflicts in our contemporary world.

Among the early Christian writers, Paul stands out for the use of the concept of reconciliation in his kerygma. While the search for the centrality of Paul's theology is still ongoing, today there is a growing movement among contemporary Pauline scholars to recognize reconciliation as the bedrock of all Paul's theology and mission. Martin Ralph, for instance, in his "New Testament Theology: A Proposal," suggests that the single term "reconciliation", 'broadly conceived and applied' represents the "*centrum Paulinus*," the overarching core of his soteriology—indeed, 'the organizing principle of New Testament theology.'<sup>1</sup> John de Gruchy affirms that, for Paul, "reconciliation is the controlling metaphor for expressing the gospel."<sup>2</sup> Arguing from the same perspective, Willard Swartley observes: "the notion of making peace between humans and God and between formerly alienated humans is so central to the core of Pauline doctrinal and ethical thought that it is impossible to develop a faithful construal of Pauline thought without peacemaking and/or reconciliation at the core"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Ralph, "New Testament Theology: A Proposal. The Theme of Reconciliation," *Expository Times* 91 (1980): 364-368, quoted in Corneliu Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology: Narrative Readings in Romans* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2010), 32-33.

<sup>2</sup> John de Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 45.

<sup>3</sup> Willard M. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 192.

Despite what seems to me a renewed interest in the study of reconciliation/peacemaking themes in Paul, the majority of the studies on the theology of reconciliation have concentrated on the vertical (God-human) dimension of reconciliation, that is, the reconciliation of the individual to God through the Christ event while undermining the horizontal (intra-human) aspect. From this perspective, reconciliation and even salvation are often viewed as an individualized spiritual experience that have no socio-political import. Ralf Wustenberg for instance, has argued that “although Paul received the concept of reconciliation from a political sphere, when it is used theologically it is not controlled by the political..., once it was transferred into the theological, to a great degree the concept of reconciliation lost its political and social dimension in Paul.”<sup>4</sup>

However, a few recent studies of Pauline theology of reconciliation have challenged this old trajectory to highlight the socio-political dimensions of reconciliation in Paul that were interlocked with the spiritual dimension. In fact, these studies have shown that Paul’s gospel has social and political dimensions which are not just an appendix to his writings but are integral and fundamental elements of it.<sup>5</sup> Very important in these new readings of Paul is the attention paid to the socio-political world (context) within which Paul lived and within which his letters circulated. Examining Paul’s socio-political context offers new insights for understanding not only Paul’s theology of reconciliation but also its implications for relationships within the first century Christian communities.

This study intends to contribute to the ongoing study of the complementarity of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of Paul’s theology of reconciliation through an exegetical and

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<sup>4</sup> Ralf K. Wustenberg, *The Political Dimension of Reconciliation* (trans. Randi H. Lundel; Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2009), 32.

<sup>5</sup> *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. Richard A. Horsley; Harriburg: Trinity Press International 1997).

theological study of Rom 5:1-11. In the passage, Paul employs a political and economic concept, “reconciliation,” in his soteriological discourse to explain the way in which the love of God in Jesus Christ turns enemies into friends, thereby creating peace. Through the Christ-event, God not only abolished the hostilities between God and humans, but also the hostilities among human beings, even the hostilities between humans and nature, thereby inaugurating a new order within human history. For Paul, the immediate purpose and result of God’s peace-making, redemptive act in Jesus’ death was the creation of a new community of reconciled people who will continue to participate in God’s reconciling action. Within this new community of God’s people, the old things have passed away and the new things have come to be (2 Cor 5:16-6:2). Empowered by the divine Spirit, this new people no longer thinks or acts from the old age perspective of gender, class, nationality/race distinction; rather, they are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. This ministry of reconciliation proceeds on the basis that “in Christ” the categories of race, social standing, and gender are relativized, thereby weakening the structural boundaries they typically erect. The core of Paul’s message is that the new community should embody God’s righteousness, justice, reconciliation, and peace within and outside their community as reflection of the gracious reconciliation and peace which God has offered them.

Two rationales undergird this study. First, this study aims at exploring the significance of Paul’s theology of reconciliation on racial relationships and gender roles within the early Christian community in Rome as can be gleaned from the letter to the Romans. Second, there is a growing awareness today that biblical theology and hermeneutics must articulate and reflect on existential situations. Consequently, this research will also explore the relevance of Paul’s theology of reconciliation in Rom 5:1-11 for the Igbo Christian communities in Nigeria. Ndi Igbo are predominantly Christians, yet they have experienced numerous conflicts and factions such as the



ones issuing from the Osu Cast System which has perennially kept the Diala (sons of the soil) and the Osu (outcaste) in enmity with one another. As a patriarchal culture, there are also conflicts arising from discriminatory laws and practices against women, as well as gender stereotypes. This study shall provide cogent exegetical and theological principles that will enable this Christian community to embody reconciliation in their everyday life.

### **Significance of Study**

Although there are many literary works on Paul's theology of reconciliation, no work so far has specifically investigated the implications of Paul's theology of reconciliation in Rom 5:1-11 on racial and gender relations within the context of the Roman Christian community vis-a-vis the Igbo Christian community. In addition, this study will contribute in the ongoing fight against the Igbo traditional and cultural practices that devalue the human person on account of ethnicity and gender.

## CHAPTER ONE

### CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND OF RECONCILIATION

#### Introduction

It has been argued that “any specific personal religious life, with its experiences and inner conviction, always clothes itself in the thought forms and language of a particular age. Every religious individual finds himself in a strong stream of tradition which in turn supports and enriches him....”<sup>6</sup> The question that arises from this presupposition is, what are the traditions behind Paul’s understanding of reconciliation? In what ways do the religious, cultural, and socio-political realities of Paul’s time shape his perspective on reconciliation?

Paul’s letters show that he was acquainted with the religious, cultural, social, and political matrix of the Greco-Roman world, including his own Jewish background. His letters are born out of this context, and his ideas and thoughts reflect the intellectual climate of his time. Paul was born and bred in Tarsus (Acts 22:28), the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia, known in antiquity as a university and a commercial city. It is unquestionable that Paul was fully imbued in his community’s intellectual heritage. Paul’s Hellenistic education exposed him to all forms of Greek philosophy, to Greek literary and rhetorical style, and to Greek culture, religion, politics, cosmology, sports, and ecumenical tendencies.<sup>7</sup> Ecumenical tendencies here refers to the cultural and political expeditions inaugurated by Alexander the Great which aimed at forming a culturally intertwined empire out of Western and Eastern cultures.

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<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Knopf, “Paul and Hellenism,” *The American Journal of Theology* 18 (1914): 498.

<sup>7</sup> Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* (Louisville: Westminster, 1991), 19.

Alexander made the unity of humankind (known as the policy of the fusion of races) as his political mandate. At least two concrete incidents support this claim: (a) the Susa wedding where Alexander and 91 of his men married Persian women in order to erase the distinction between the conqueror and the conquered and (b) the banquet of reconciliation at Opis in 324 BCE, where Alexander prayed “that the Macedonians and the Persians might be partners in the commonwealth and that the peoples of his world might live in harmony and in unity of heart and mind”<sup>8</sup> According to William Woodthorpe Tarn, Alexander “was the first of all men to transcend national differences, and to declare, as Paul was to declare, that there was neither Greek nor barbarian.”<sup>9</sup> Practical effects of Alexander’s unification agenda includes the amalgamation of Hellenic and Eastern cultures, the replacement of the idea of “particularism” with the concept of “universalism” the internationalization of commerce, the establishment of road networks, and the spread of *koine* Greek as a common language across the empire. Although some scholars have questioned this highly idealized image of Alexander, noting the massacres that occurred during the period of Alexander’s annexation, what is important for this study is the possible influence of the rich Hellenistic heritage on Paul in both his thought and writings.

While in Phil 3:5 Paul’s autobiographical sketch emphasizes his Jewishness, it is through Luke that we learn that Paul studied and was indoctrinated in the Jewish educational system under Gamaliel, one of the great rabbinical scholars of his time (Acts 22:3). According to Robert Picirilli, as a student in a rabbinic school, Paul would have studied “the Midrashim, expositions of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Halacha, legal customs and practices, ... the Haggadah, non-legal

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<sup>8</sup> William Woodthorpe Tarn, *Alexander the Great* (Boston: Beacon, 1956), 145.

<sup>9</sup> William Woodthorpe Tarn, “The Policy of Fusion,” in *Alexander the Great: A Reader* (ed. Ian Worthington; New York: Routledge, 2003), 206.

narratives exegeting the scriptures.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, Paul was acquainted with the Jewish sacred writings, and with Jewish methods of interpretation, traditions, laws, and customs. He was very much integrated into the rich religious worldview of his people. Therefore, in order to understand Paul’s theological perspectives as it pertains to his theology of reconciliation, it is imperative to grasp these religious, cultural, and sociopolitical realities that shaped his thought. Consequently, this chapter will (1) examine the linguistic and cultural development of the concept of reconciliation in both the Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds; (2) investigate the meaning of reconciliation for first century Christians in Rome within the context of Roman imperial ideology and colonial realities; and (3) articulate Paul’s dynamic and creative appropriation and adaptation of this concept, showing his new insight in the understanding of reconciliation.

To achieve this objective, this study will employ the diachronic and synchronic method of investigation in order to search for the origin, development, and meaning of reconciliation for Paul and the house churches in Rome. The diachronic method provides information with regard to possible social, cultural, political, religious, historical, and literary influences on Paul’s concept of reconciliation, while the synchronic approach examines Paul’s personal appropriation of the term in some of his writings. The aim is to discover the interconnectedness of the vertical and horizontal aspects of reconciliation in Paul’s thought.

## **1.1 Greco-Roman and Jewish Background of the Concept of Reconciliation**

**1.1.1 Greco-Roman Concept of Reconciliation:** The English word “reconciliation” comes from the Latin word *reconciliare*, which means “to bring together.” Implicit in this meaning “is

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<sup>10</sup> Robert E. Picirilli, *Paul the Apostle: Missionary, Martyr, Theologian* (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 30.

the movement of two parties previously at a (metaphorical) distance from one another, so that they are now close to one another again.”<sup>11</sup> The Latin word consists of *con* (“together”) and *calo/calare* (“to call or summon”),<sup>12</sup> and the “re” prefix means “again.” *Reconciliare* is used in the sense of calling together or bringing together again for the purpose of friendship. The *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* defines reconciliation as “the action of reestablishing friendship between two persons who are on bad terms, to replace hostility with peaceful relations.”<sup>13</sup> “Reconciliation” translates the Greek noun καταλλαγή and the Greek verbs καταλλάσσω and διαλλάσσω. The καταλλαγή-καταλλάσσω word group is a compound form of ἀλλάσσω, which means “to change,” “to alter,” “to renew.”<sup>14</sup> ἀλλάσσω is derived from ἄλλος, meaning the “other.” It carries the sense of making otherwise, to change/exchange for goods or things. However, this sense of exchange was metaphorically extended to include the exchange of relations. This included the exchange of enmity or hostility for friendship, whether involving persons or larger political entities.<sup>15</sup> Greeks used καταλλαγή in two senses. First, it denotes an exchange of goods or things — that which is paid in exchange, in the settlement of a disagreement between parties. “Parties are reconciled with each other by paying to the other a stipulated sum: the καταλλαγή (the balance).”<sup>16</sup> Second, it denotes the elimination of hostility and the creation of friendship, exchanging enmity for

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<sup>11</sup> Ian Paul, “Reconciliation in the New Testament,” in *Good Disagreement? Grace and Truth in a Divided Church* (ed. Andrew Atherstone and Andrew Goddard; Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2015), 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Latin Dictionary and Grammar Aid, University of Notre Dame*, last modified, July 5, 2017, <http://www.nd.edu/~archives/latgramm.htm>

<sup>13</sup> James D. Ernest, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 262.

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Büchsel, “ἀλλάσσω, ἀντάλλαμα, ἀπ-, δι-, καταλλάσσω, καταλλαγή, ἀποκατ-, μεταλλάσσω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament vol. 1* (ed. Gerhard Kittel; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 251.

<sup>15</sup> Stanley E. Porter, “Reconciliation as the Heart of Paul’s Missionary Theology,” in *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice* (ed. Trevor J. Burke, Brian S. Rosner; New York: T&T International, 2011), 173.

<sup>16</sup> William G. T. Shedd, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 119.

friendship, an “adjustment of a difference, reconciliation.”<sup>17</sup> This word group describes a change from anger, enmity, hostility, or estrangement to love and friendship.

Καταλλάσσω and καταλλαγή,<sup>18</sup> the primary concern of this study, are found often in Greco-Roman literature. In some texts, materials are exchanged, such as in trade or exchange of money. In other texts, the change involves the transformation of relations between individuals, people, or nations; that is, a change from enmity, hostility, and alienation, to love and friendship, such as in the socio-political sphere. Classical Greek texts highlight the interpersonal aspects of these concepts. For instance, Herodotus, the Greek historian, uses the term to describe how regional disputes were settled. He narrates the story of Periander, who reconciled the Mytileneans and Athenians, two warring groups. The terms of this reconciliation “were that each party should keep what it had” (κατήλλαξε δὲ ὧδε, νέμεσθαι ἑκατέρους τὴν ἔχουσι).<sup>19</sup> In this example, a third party initiates a reconciliation between two conflicting parties. Plato wrote of a tyrant who found peace with some of his enemies through being reconciled. “As soon as he has relieved himself of his exiled enemies, by becoming reconciled (καταλλαγή) to some and by destroying others....”<sup>20</sup> The tyrant offered reconciliation through diplomatic measures, but destroyed those who rejected his diplomacy. In his *Roman Antiquities*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus tells the story of Mettius Fufetius, an Alban general who took the initiative of bringing about reconciliation (καταλλαγάς) between the Albans and the Romans.<sup>21</sup> Fufetius first called for the laying aside of their mutual

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<sup>17</sup> Stanley E. Porter, *καταλλάσσω in Ancient Greek Literature, with Reference to the Pauline Writings* (Cordoba: Almendro, 1994), 13.

<sup>18</sup> Other prefixed forms (ἀντικαταλλάσσω, ἀποκαταλλάσσω, etc.) are found in some Pauline letters. In this study, attention will be paid to the basic form- καταλλάσσω- which is found in Rom 5:10-11.

<sup>19</sup> Herodotus, *The Persian Wars* 5.95.

<sup>20</sup> Plato, *Republic* 8.566 e. The translation is from *The Republic: The Comprehensive Student Edition* (ed. Andrea Tschemplik; New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 315.

<sup>21</sup> Dionysius, *Roman Antiquities* 3.5.4; 3.8.4.

enmity to enable a true reconciliation to occur. The important things in this narrative are the laying aside of mutual enmity and the agreement of terms of reconciliation between the two cities.

Besides the above political contexts, Greek marriage records use ἀπαλλάσσεσθαι to denote the separation of married couples, while καταλλάσσεσθαι is used for their “reconciliation.”<sup>22</sup> Josephus narrates the story of a couple who separated because of constant quarreling. But the man took the initiative to reconcile with his wife because of his love for her.<sup>23</sup> Reconciliation in the Greco-Roman world occurs at the interpersonal level, that is, in the political, social, familial, and/or moral sphere of life. It is rarely found in the religious sphere. One instance in which καταλλάσσω appeared in a religious context in a classical Greek text is in Sophocles’ play *Ajax*. Following the unjust events of the Trojan War, Ajax was very angry and, realizing that he has been deceived into killing Greek sheep and cattle, he leaves the stage to reconcile with the gods. Scholars differ on how θεοῖσιν ὡς καταλλαχθῆ ἡ χόλου<sup>24</sup> should be interpreted. What is important in the text is the reference to καταλλάσσω in a relationship between gods and humans. Another instance of reconciliation language in the religious sphere is found in Plato’s *Symposium*, where Aristophanes argues: “...if we make friends with the god and are reconciled (διαλλαγέντες τῷ θεῷ), we shall have the fortune that falls to few in our day, of discovering our proper favorites....”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Büchsel, “ἀλλάσσω,” 255.

<sup>23</sup> Josephus, *Judean Antiquities* 5.137.

<sup>24</sup> Sophocles, *Ajax*, 744. Some translators interpret this line as “Ajax’s reconciliation with the gods after his anger”, or “with whom he has been angry,” while some interpret it as a reflexive dative to mean “in order that he reconcile himself to the gods from his anger.” What is at stake here is whether Ajax is reconciling with the gods whom he offended as a result of his anger, or he is reconciling with his own anger to the gods. Cf. Reimund Bieringer, ““Reconcile yourselves to God”: An Unusual Interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:20 in Its Context,” in *Jesus, Paul and Early Christianity: Studies in Honor of Henk Jan de Jonge* (ed. Rieuwerd Buitenwerf, et al; Boston: Brill, 2008), 22-25.

<sup>25</sup> Plato *Symposium*, 193b, quoted in Cilliers Breytenbach, *Grace, Reconciliation, Concord: The Death of Christ in Graeco-Roman Metaphors* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 176.

These two examples demonstrate that even though reconciliation in the Greco-Roman world was primarily used for interpersonal relationships, and also within the context of political-military peace treaties, the idea of reconciliation with God was not foreign; it was just not fully developed. From the above findings, I agree with John T. Fitzgerald and Corneliu Constantineanu that καταλλάσσω in the Greco-Roman world exhibits the following characteristics: (1) it presupposes wrongdoing of one or more parties which created the conflict; (2) the offending party usually initiates reconciliation, seeking to appease the offended party; (3) reconciliation may take the form of an appeal; (4) reparations are necessary in order to pacify the estranged party; and (5) reconciliation involves benefits and responsibilities: fulfilling one's tasks in full confidence of a restored relationship and living in light of a renewed concord with one another.<sup>26</sup> The significance of this review is to help us to see that Paul worked within the intellectual, cultural, and social context of his day in which language was developed and used.

**1.1.2 Jewish Concept of Reconciliation:** Greco-Roman culture was not the only major influence on Paul's concept of reconciliation. Paul's Jewish background was another major influence. His self-professed "zeal" as a Jew brought him great familiarity not only with the Hebrew and Greek (LXX) texts of the Jewish Canon and Apocrypha, but also with their theology and spirituality. As a Pharisee, Paul was committed to the Jewish Scriptures. This high value placed on Scripture presupposes that Paul had their precepts ingrained in his mind as he wrote about their embodiment in Christ. This section will examine the Jewish understanding of reconciliation in the Hebrew canon and the LXX, as well as its influence on the Pauline concept of reconciliation.

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<sup>26</sup> 9 John T. Fitzgerald, "Paul and Paradigm Shifts: Reconciliation and Its Linkage Group," in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville: John Knox, 2001), 231-232. Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 90-91.



Semantically, the Hebrew Scriptures lack an equivalent term for καταλλάσσω, but conceptually, the notion of reconciliation is evident in Hebrew texts. Inferring from Louw and Nida's premise that "meanings involving reconciliation have a presuppositional component of opposition and hostility, and the process of reconciliation reverses the presuppositional factors,"<sup>27</sup> one might argue that any biblical text which deals with God's benevolent means of overcoming humanity's acts of hostility, and with God's persistent offer of love and friendship to humanity, is implicitly dealing with reconciliation. In fact, the Hebrew Bible begins with an account of human rebellion against God immediately after God's creation (Gen 3-4). Subsequent to this rebellious act, the intimate bond between God and humanity, and that between human beings themselves, was ruptured. Human beings became alienated from God, from one another, and even nature was wounded. Hulitt Gloer argues that if this "'broken intimacy' is, indeed, the fundamental problem between humanity and God, humanity and fellow human beings, and humanity and creation, then the restoration of that intimacy becomes primary, and such restoration of intimacy is best conceived in terms of reconciliation."<sup>28</sup> Beginning with the "fall," God has continually sought to reconcile humanity to Godself and has always provided ways for humanity to come back into harmonious relation with him.

Recognizing that the Jews' covenantal sacrifices were done for the ultimate purpose of reconciliation of individuals and the community with God, some scholars have proposed covenant (ברית) and atonement (כפר) as the background for Paul's understanding of καταλλάσσω. כפר (*kippur*), translated as ἱλαστήριον (*hilasterion*) in the LXX, originally means "to cover," "to cover

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<sup>27</sup> J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 502, quoted in Turner David, "Paul and the Ministry of Reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5: 11-6:2" *Criswell Theological Review* 4, no.1 (1989), 83.

<sup>28</sup> W. Hulitt Gloer, *An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Understanding of New Creation and Reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5:14-21* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1996), 95.

over.” Later it came to acquire other meanings, such as “to pacify,” “to wipe off,” “to purify,” “to propitiate.”<sup>29</sup> *Kippur* is used often to denote the act of reconciliation through sacrificial ritual. On *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, the priest sprinkles the blood of an animal on the Kapporeth<sup>30</sup> to cleanse the sins of the people which have broken their relationship with God, with the intention of restoring that relationship. Lev 16:20-22 describes the work of reconciliation performed by Aaron, the high priest on the Day of Atonement. *Kippur* is found in 2 Sam 21:3 in reference to David’s “atonement” for the massacre of the Gibeonites by Saul, which was the reason God inflicted the land of Israel with famine. Here, we see an idea of the restoration of relationship between God and humans, and among humans themselves (the Israelites and the Gibeonites).

Inferring from Heb 9:11-10:1, we can say that early Christians used the Day of Atonement as a basis for interpreting the death of Christ. Gloer comments that “while there are no direct parallels between the two, the descriptive effects of reconciliation (peace; the non-imputation of transgressions) parallel the stated effects of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16:30b.... The result of Day of Atonement for Jews and of Christ’s death for Jewish Christians is the same: to siphon off the wrath of God from the entire community.”<sup>31</sup>

However, some scholars reject the association of reconciliation with atonement as the basis of Paul’s theology of reconciliation. Breytenbach, for instance, rejects this association based on the fact that καταλλάσσω terminology prior to Paul was essentially secular and not cultic. He argues that there is “no semantic or traditio-historical reason to link the origin of the Pauline

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<sup>29</sup> Richard Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 567. Richard Gregg Watson, “Wrath and Reconciliation: An Exegetical Study of the Idea of Propitiation in the Old Testament Narrative Literature” (PhD. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995), 55.

<sup>30</sup> This is the lid (cover) on the ark of the covenant.

<sup>31</sup> Hulitt Gloer, *An Exegetical*, 96-97.

notion of reconciliation with the Old Testament theology of atonement.”<sup>32</sup> His examination of certain vocabulary used by Paul in 2 Cor 5:20, such as “ambassador” (πρεβεύω), “petition” (δέομαι), and “appeal” (παρακαλέω), led him to conclude that only the peace treaty process in the Hellenistic politico-military context was the source of Paul’s use of καταλλάσσω.

But the above argument fails when we realize that Jewish authors such as Josephus, Philo, and the author of 2 Maccabees employed the secular/diplomatic term- καταλλάσσω in a religious sense. Josephus, for instance, used the noun καταλλάκτης to describe the mediating role of Moses. In this text (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 3.315.2), the Israelites entreated Moses to procure their reconciliation with God so that God will no longer suffer them to wander in the wilderness. Καταλλάσσω-καταλλαγή terminology occurs in religious contexts many times in the LXX. In 2 Macc 1:5, 5:20, 7:33 and 8:29, the καταλλάσσω-καταλλαγή word group was used to describe divine – human reconciliation. For instance, 2 Macc. 1:5 contains the following prayer: “may he (God) be reconciled (καταλλαγήσεται) to you.” In this text and others, reconciliation occurs in the passive voice for Yahweh. Yahweh was the object of reconciliation. In Maccabees, the necessity for reconciliation is linked to the anger of God that needs to be pacified, or the removal of sin that has caused enmity with God. Although Paul differs from this tradition by rejecting the passive role attributed to God in the act of reconciliation, the idea of Paul’s divine–human reconciliation may have come from his modification of this tradition.

רָסַח (*rasah*) is another term in the Jewish Scriptures that expresses the concept of reconciliation. *Rasah* means “to please,” “to appease,” “to satisfy,” or “to placate.”<sup>33</sup> The term appears six times in the OT (Lev 8:15; 1 Sam 29:4; 2 Chr 29:24; Ezek 45:15, 45:17; Dan 9:24) in

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<sup>32</sup> Cilliers Breytenbach, “Reconciliation: Shifts in Christian Soteriology,” in *Reconciliation and Construction: Creative options for a Rapidly Changing South Africa* (ed. W.S. Forster; Pretoria: Unisa, 1986), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 567.

the context of a wrongdoer placating by some act of restitution or by favor to someone who has been wronged; this enables reconciliation to take place. 1 Sam 29:4 is an important text in this regard in the sense that it helps us to understand Paul's idea of reconciliation. In the passage, the Philistines were unwilling that David should go to battle with them against the Israelites for fear that he might defect to the Israelites and use the heads of the Philistines to gratify Saul who was angry with him. The commander asks: "for how could this fellow reconcile (יִתְרַצֵּה) himself with his lord? Would it not be with the heads of men here?" Here the Philistine commander's idea of David reconciling himself to Saul was not that David should lay aside his enmity against Saul and become his friend. Rather, the enmity was on Saul's side, and the thought of the Philistine was that David, by turning against the Philistines in battle, would gratify Saul and persuade him to lay aside his anger against David. The importance of this text is that it is David, the offended party, who is taking the initiative in reconciling Saul to himself. The passage is an illustration of a horizontal aspect of reconciliation in the Hebrew Bible. The attempt to reconcile oneself to another human being is also captured in the act of Jacob towards his brother Esau in Gen 33:1-17, and in the act of Joseph towards his brothers in Egypt in Gen 45:1-15. So *kippur* and *rasah*, taken together, give us the idea of vertical and horizontal dimensions of reconciliation in the OT. In the former, God is reconciled to the people by the means of sacrifice. In the latter, the people seek to reconcile with one another for a peaceful and harmonious relationship.

In this search for the source of Paul's concept of reconciliation, some scholars have proposed the Isaianic concept of "peace" and "new creation" found in Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 40-66) as a major Pauline influence. Proponents include Gregory Beale and William Lane.<sup>34</sup> By

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<sup>34</sup> William L. Lane, "Covenant: the key to Paul's conflict with Corinth," *Tyndale Bulletin* (1982): 3-29. Gregory K. Beale, "The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5-7 and Its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1," in *The Right Doctrines from the Wrong Text?* (ed. Gregory K. Beale; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 217-247.

conceptually linking new creation and reconciliation, and by establishing parallelism between Isaiah 40-60 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Beale posits that “Paul understands both new creation and reconciliation in Christ (2 Cor 5: 17- 21) as the inaugurated fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy of a new creation in which Israel would be restored into a peaceful relationship with God...”<sup>35</sup> Note that the prophet Isaiah interprets Israel’s exile to Babylon as an estrangement that was a consequence of her sin (e.g., Isa 50:1; 57:17, 59:1-5). The restoration from this estrangement from the prophet’s perspective is a redemptive new creation (Isa 43:18-19), when God will forgive the people’s transgression and free them from their bondage of sin by the sacrificial death of the suffering servant (Isa 53:4-12). It is also a time when God will restore a peaceful relationship between God and the people. According to Beale, Paul links the Isaianic promise with the work of Christ, and sees in Christ’s death and resurrection the fulfilment of the promise. The significance of Beale’s study lies in the connection it makes between the teaching of Paul with that of the Jewish Scriptures, thus affirming Peter Stuhlmacher’s observation that “the Old Testament traditions are as a whole the linguistic presupposition for the formation of the New Testament message of revelation and reconciliation.”<sup>36</sup> Beale’s study is relevant as it has encouraged recent scholarship on Paul to recognize the centrality of Israel’s story in the formulation of his theology.<sup>37</sup>

**1.1.3 Early Christian Background:** Besides the Jewish Scriptures, some scholars have looked to the traditions behind the Synoptic Gospels as the inspiration for Paul’s theology of reconciliation. For instance, Leonhard Goppelt’s studies of the story of the prodigal son, the call of Levi, the fellowship with Zacchaeus, and Jesus’ self-sacrificial demonstration of God’s love for his enemies led him to conclude that “the earthly work of Jesus provides the basic influence on the

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<sup>35</sup> Beale, “The Old Testament Background,” 219.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher, “The Gospel of Reconciliation in Christ. Basic Features and Issues of a Biblical Theology of the New Testament,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* (1979): 183.

<sup>37</sup> Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 28.

Pauline concept of reconciliation.<sup>38</sup> An explicit reference to reconciliation (διαλλάσσω) is found in Matt 5:24, where Jesus teaches about reconciliation between brothers (ὑπαγε πρῶτον διαλλάγηθι τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου). Just as in the Hellenistic literature already reviewed, in Matthew διαλλάσσω is used for interpersonal relationships. An important insight here is that Jesus makes an intrinsic connection between vertical and horizontal reconciliation. Matthew highlights the importance of peace and reconciliation between brothers and sisters within the context of worship. Reconciliation with God entails reconciliation with one's brother or sister.

Finally, Paul's theology of reconciliation cannot be understood properly apart from his Damascus Road experience (Acts 22:6-16; 26:12-18). The Damascus Road experience is the event whereby God reconciled Paul to Godself, taught him the message of reconciliation, and then commissioned him to be the envoy of the word and ministry of reconciliation. It is an "event where the enemy and persecutor of the Church was reconciled to both God (the Lord of the Church) and the 'people of the way' (the disciples), and was then set apart for the mission of the Church as an apostle of the Gentiles—who, for the Jews, were completely outside God's plan of reconciliation."<sup>39</sup> When Paul encountered the resurrected Jesus and experienced forgiveness and reconciliation of God, he knew what true reconciliation and peace meant. The strength of this proposal is its elucidation of the interconnectedness of the vertical and horizontal aspects of reconciliation. In the account of the event in Acts 9:4-5, the voice that spoke to Saul said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." What is obvious here is that Jesus is identified with his people.

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<sup>38</sup> Leonhard Goppelt, "Versöhnung durch Christu," *Christologie und Ethnik: Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1968), 150, quoted in W. Hulitt Gloer, *An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Understanding of New Creation and Reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5:14-21* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 102.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Ochola-Omolo, *Reconciliation in an African Context: Paul's Theology of Reconciliation Engaging Honor and Shame Cultural Elements among the Gusil, Luhya and Luo People of Western Kenya* (Nairobi: Uzima, 2008), 16.

Enmity with God's people implies enmity with God, and vice versa. When Paul experienced reconciliation of God, God made that his mission mandate.

In summary, what this brief review has shown is the multifaceted linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds that may have influenced Paul's concept of reconciliation. Although Paul's immediate context—the Greco-Roman world, the Jewish Scriptures, the Septuagint (LXX), Hellenistic Jewish writers, and early Christianity (reflecting early Jesus' tradition), and even Paul's religious experience—played major roles in his understanding of reconciliation, none of them can fully explain his innovative way of using the metaphor of reconciliation. However, a synthesis of these elements is necessary for understanding Paul's theology of reconciliation.

## **1.2 The Roman Imperial Context of Romans**

This section on the Roman imperial context of Romans is concerned with the question of how the social and political realities of the Christian community in Rome influenced Paul's application of his understanding and experience of reconciliation. The subject of the Roman Empire arises naturally in the study of Paul's letter to the Romans for several reasons: (a) the Christian community to whom the letter was addressed lived in Rome, the seat of the Roman Empire and the center of its imperial ideology and rhetoric of peace and security, justice, and salvation; (b) the Christian community to whom Paul addressed the letter consisted of different ethnic groups and social status—a mixture of colonized persons, and colonizers, the marginalized and privileged, women and men who strive to transcend the barriers of ethnicity, gender, and social class that were instituted and maintained by the empire; and (c) the letter contains many politically laden terms which have social and political implications.

**1.2.1 The Roman Imperial Peace Agenda:** Rom 5:1-11 can be better understood if read and situated within the broader context of the Roman imperial policy of conciliation known as the *Pax Romana*. In *The Aeneid*, Virgil declares the Roman imperial mission as follows: “Remember, Roman, that it is for you to rule the people beneath your sway! These shall be your arts: to impose peace and the rule of law; to spare the conquered and battle down the proud.”<sup>40</sup> For Virgil, it was Augustus who was destined to bring the Golden Age to Rome, an era of great peace, security, and prosperity, and to fulfil Rome’s destiny to rule the world.<sup>41</sup> Virgil’s vision of the Augustan Golden Age is marked by the banishing of war, the advent of faith and justice, the flourishing of law, and the upsurge of piety in the whole land—virtues that Augustus himself would embody. The year 31 BCE marked the beginning of the realization of Virgil’s vision, as Rome finally witnessed the end of a string of seemingly endless civil wars that had continued, relatively uninterrupted, since 49 BCE. Augustus accomplished this end with the Battle of Actium and the defeat of Marcus Antonius, and therefore achieved the first facet of the Golden Age. Augustus claimed he ended the war in order to bring peace to the world. But according to Matthew J. Bowser, “Augustus appeared to end the civil war because of his brutal and single-minded quest for ultimate power, not for an idealistic goal such as the one mentioned by Virgil.”<sup>42</sup> Support for Bowser’s claim can be found in an ancient document the *Agricola*, which presents a counter view of Augustus’s peace propaganda.

Through conquest, annexation, expansion, and consolidation, Augustus and his successors enthroned their vision of world peace. Speaking about the delusion of *Pax Romana*, Calagus

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<sup>40</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid* (trans. C. Day Lewis; Oxford, 1986), 6.851-853.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 791-794.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew J. Bowser, “The Golden Age of Rome: Augustus’ Program to Better the Roman Empire” (bachelor of philosophy thesis, University of Pittsburgh 2013), 7.



writes, “to plunder, butcher, steal, these things they misname empire. They make a desolation and call it peace.”<sup>43</sup> Augustus lived the Aristotelian dictum “we make wars that we may live in peace.” Through the Augustan wars, Rome expanded its territories to northern Europe, Africa, and Asia. Ian Rock notes that for the Roman Empire, “harmony consisted of servile submission and obedience to Rome and lending assistance willingly in her battles. Within Rome, it means the willingness to sacrifice self for the sake of country, the surety of freedom, the payment of taxes and tributes, resignation of national sovereignty to Rome, and the quiescence of strife between nations in the provinces.”<sup>44</sup> Wherever Roman domination led to a legitimate uprising or resistance, Rome would induce peace and reconciliation through military might. The message of peace through military conquest, according to Peter Sarris, was constantly reiterated to Rome’s citizens and subjects by means of imperial edicts and pronouncements, arts and literature, through periodic acts of brutality in the face of local revolts such as crucifixion, through stone monuments such as the column of Marcus Aurelius which displayed the bloodthirsty scene of captured barbarian warriors being beheaded, and their women and children being massacred or led into slavery.<sup>45</sup>

Augustus demonstrated his claim of peace by two symbolic actions: three times he celebrated his triumph, and three times he closed the doors of the temple Janus Quirinius, a symbolic action that suggested that peace was prevailing throughout the Empire.<sup>46</sup> It was to the “barbarians” whom Rome believed it must subdue in order to bring about the Golden Age of peace that Paul feels obligated to share the gospel that proclaims a new method of global reconciliation.

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<sup>43</sup> *Agricola*, 30.3-31.2 quoted in Bruce W. Longenecker, “Peace, Prosperity, and Propaganda: Advertisement and Reality in the Early Roman Empire,” in *An Introduction to Empire in the New Testament* (ed. Adam Winn; Atlanta: SBL, 2016), 41.

<sup>44</sup> Ian E. Rock, *Paul’s letter to the Romans and Roman Imperialism: An Ideological Analysis of the Exordium Romans 1:1-17* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012), 177-178.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Sarris, *Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam, 500-700* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>46</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 12-13.

He explicitly wishes this community not the peace of the Roman Empire, but peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 1:2, 5:1-2).

**1.2.2 Social Stratification:** This is another form of Roman imperial ideology through which Rome not only maintained its dominance but also perpetuated division within the Empire. A voyage into the first-century social milieu of the Roman Empire shows real disparity between the elites and the lower socio-economic classes. David Nystrom cites Seneca who voiced this reality as follows, “aggressively class conscious, the Romans took active steps to reinforce social stratification in even the smallest of cities.”<sup>47</sup> The Roman Empire was both hierarchical and patriarchal. Power and social positions were hereditary. The social elites who comprised about 2-3 percent of the population held nearly all of the positions of power. In an agrarian society, the elites were the ones who “owned the valuable land and consumed about 65 percent of its production, thus allowing the landowners to exploit the hired laborers.”<sup>48</sup> Warren Carter argues that these aristocrats dominated the lower classes of people in all aspects of society: in politics, land ownership, trade and labor agreements, slavery, taxation and tributes, military power, social relations, religious rites, rhetoric, judicial system, and city management.<sup>49</sup> It was these mixed social classes with different socioeconomic realities that constituted the church in Rome. What feeling is evoked, for instance, when the oppressed and the oppressor, the freeperson and the slave, and Jews and Gentiles congregate together in the house churches at Rome? We can find the answer in Paul’s insistence on reconciliation, peace, love, and tolerance in the letter to the Romans.

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<sup>47</sup> David Nystrom, “We have no King but Caesar: Roman Imperial Ideology and the Imperial Cults,” in *Jesus is Lord, Caesar is not: Evaluating Empires in New Testament Studies* (ed. Scot McKnight, Joseph B. Modica; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), 26.

<sup>48</sup> Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

### 1.3 Paul's Perspective on Reconciliation

The use of the καταλλάσσω-καταλλαγή terminology in the New Testament occur only in the Pauline letters. Paul uses the verb καταλλάσσω six times (Rom 5:10, 1 Cor 7:11; 2 Cor 5:18, 19, 20). The noun καταλλαγή occurs four times (Rom 5:11; 11:15; 2 Cor 5:18, 19), while the verb ἀποκαταλλάσσω is found three times (Eph 2:16; Col 1:20, 22). In all these occurrences, reconciliation is used in a theological sense except for one parenthetical use in 1 Cor 7:11, which deals with a wife being reconciled to her husband. In this text, Paul exhorts a woman who has left her husband to remain unmarried or be reconciled with her husband. The text is not explicit on who was the offended party. But Porter argues that since the discussion is about a woman who takes the initiative in leaving her husband, it is to be presumed that she feels offended by him and in her indignation, separates from him.<sup>50</sup> If Porter's argument is correct, it means that it is the woman (the offended party) whom Paul asked to initiate a reconciliation. She is the key person to end the conflict and bring about a reconciliation between the two.

The same thought pattern is seen in Rom 5:10-11 and 2 Cor 5:18-20, but in a vertical relationship. According to Paul, it is God, the offended party, who is the one who initiates reconciliation with sinful humanity. God accomplishes this reconciliation through Christ. This is contrary to the Greco-Roman perspective where the verb καταλλάσσω (to reconcile) plays no essential role in the propitiatory rites of religion. For in the Greco-Roman religion, "the relation between divinity and humanity does not have this personal nearness."<sup>51</sup> Pauline reconciliation also differs from the LXX, where God needed to be reconciled to people through prayers, sacrifices, and sufferings (cf. 2 Macc 1:5; 7:33; 8:29). From the Pauline perspective, God plays an active role

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<sup>50</sup> Porter, *καταλλάσσω in Ancient Greek Literature*, 121.

<sup>51</sup> Büchsel, "ἀλλάσσω... καταλλάσσω, καταλλαγή," 1. 254.

in the divine–human reconciliation. In fact, God is always the subject of the verb ‘reconcile.’ For Paul, human beings are not only reconciled with God, they are also new creatures: ὥστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινὰ (“The old things have passed away and everything has become new”; 2 Cor 5:17). The old things of enmity (ἐχθρός), moral and spiritual weakness (ἀσθενής), sinfulness (ἁμαρτωλός), and ungodliness (ἀσεβής) (cf. Rom 5:6-10) have gone, and the new things of love, peace, hope, endurance, righteousness (cf. Rom 5:1-5) have come to be. An important point for Paul in his theology of reconciliation is the holistic renewal and transformation of the human person (Rom 12:2) whom God has reconciled with Godself. Human beings are not just recipients of God’s reconciliation, they are active participants in this divine mission. These are radically new perspectives that Paul brings into the concept of καταλλάσσω.

In Col 1 and Eph 2,<sup>52</sup> Paul employs various forms of the verb ἀποκαταλλάσσω, translated as “reconcile,” in the context of his discourse on cosmic reconciliation, and on the reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles. What is of special interest for this study in these two texts is the scope of reconciliation in Paul’s thought. It is not just vertical, it is also horizontal (Jews and Gentiles) and even cosmic—the whole creation. Christ remains God’s agent, the ambassador of peace by whose single act of self-giving the barriers and systemic structures that divide peoples and nations are broken down, thereby creating peace.

In these passages, Paul retains and also transcends the basic ideas associated with reconciliation in the Greco-Roman and Jewish thought. First, Paul retains the secular idea of

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<sup>52</sup> Paul’s authorship of these two letters is been disputed among scholars because of linguistic, literary style, and doctrinal difference of these letters with the six established authentic Pauline letters. As a result, many scholars, including myself treat these two letters as written by unknown author who stands within the Pauline tradition. But for the sake of brevity, I will retain the name of Paul in my discourse of reconciliation in these two letters.

“exchange” and in this context, the exchange of hostility, enmity, and alienation for reconciliation, peace, love, and friendship in human relationships. But he applies it to the divine-human relationship. Just as in the Greco-Roman and Jewish thought, where reconciliation presupposes a wrongdoing between parties, reconciliation in the Pauline corpus is based on the awareness that all is not well in the relationship between God and humankind. This disharmony in relationship between humanity and God manifests itself in the disharmony in the relationships among humans themselves and within the whole of creation. Consequently, “reconciliation in Paul’s theology refers to the way in which the love of God in Jesus Christ turns enemies into friends thereby creating peace.”<sup>53</sup> It is about how human beings’ alienation from God is addressed and removed by the work of Christ. While the divine-human relationship may be said to be Paul’s primary focus in his reconciliation discourse, it still has ramifications for the reconciliation of relationships between humans.

Second, Paul transcends the traditional paradigm in which the guilty party seeks and takes the initiative for effecting reconciliation and makes reparation where needed. In Paul’s thought, it is God, the offended party, who takes the initiative to enact reconciliation. God takes the initiative prior to and independent of human repentance (cf. Rom 5:8, 10). Third, contrary to the traditions prior to Paul, in which it is the responsibility of the guilty party to make reparations to pacify the offended party, from Paul’s perspective, God is the one who makes the reparation on behalf of the guilty party with the death of his only Son (Rom 5:10). Fourth, there is a Trinitarian dimension to Paul’s understanding of reconciliation. God is always the subject, the initiator of reconciliation with the whole of humanity. Christ is God’s agent of reconciliation. It was through the death and resurrection of Christ that God’s reconciliation with humanity was accomplished, and the Holy

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<sup>53</sup> De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 52.

Spirit creates the conditions for harmonious existence within the Christian community through his gifts (Rom 8). Fifth, recent scholarship on Paul's theology of reconciliation shows that Paul's understanding of the term is not exhausted by the καταλλάσσω-καταλλαγή word group. Corneliu Constantineanu acknowledges that for Paul, reconciliation "describes the antithesis between hostility and peace, hate and love, separation and community, and includes such words as 'peace', 'love', 'welcome', 'unity', and 'harmony'"<sup>54</sup> It is in this sense that significant parts of Romans 5-16 are presently being studied alongside the passages in which the καταλλάσσω-καταλλαγή word group occurs. Finally, there are pastoral and ethical components of reconciliation in Paul's thought. This corresponds to the traditional paradigm in which the reconciled parties assume the responsibility to live their lives in the light of their achieved reconciliation. Paul acknowledges this in 2 Cor 5:17-21. The reconciled are to become ambassadors of God's reconciling love.

Reviewing the use of καταλλάσσω-καταλλαγή terminology in Greco-Roman world and within the broader themes of reconciliation in the Old and New Testament, we can assert that Paul's understanding of reconciliation was shaped not only by his immediate contexts, but also by his personal encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, by Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection, and by the Isaianic vision of new creation and peace. Paul maintained some continuity with the secular understanding of reconciliation that includes the replacement of enmity, alienation, hostility, with new and transformed relationships of peace and good will, at the interpersonal, socio-political levels of human relationships. However, one can agree with Stanley Porter that "Paul was a creative user of his language grammatically and conceptually."<sup>55</sup> While Paul retained traditional meanings of reconciliation, he adapted and reinterpreted the concept to

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<sup>54</sup> Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 93.

<sup>55</sup> Porter, *καταλλάσσω in Ancient Greek Literature*, 15.

make a unique theological use of it. In this sense, Paul speaks about reconciliation as the gracious way God has overcome human hostility and reconciled humanity with Godself through the Christ-event and the Spirit's ongoing role in human reconciliation. For Paul, reconciliation with God (Rom 5:10-11) implies the reconciliation of unhealthy relationships among God's people (Eph 2:16), and with the creation (Col 1:20). Hence the call to embrace the mission of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-21) which means living in peace with God and with one another, irrespective of gender, tribe, or ethnic affiliation. In this way, Paul expanded the traditional concept of reconciliation that deals with interpersonal, societal, and political aspects of life with a theological dimension, and integrated these two elements into one reality.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, it suffices to say that within Paul's vertical reconciliation, there is an embedded horizontal reconciliation.

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<sup>56</sup> Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 91-92.

## CHAPTER 2

### EXEGESIS OF ROMANS 5:1-11

#### Introduction

In the first chapter, we looked at the linguistic, socio-cultural, religious, and political realities that may have shaped Paul's understanding of καταλλαγή-καταλλάσσω terminology. I also underscored Paul's creative appropriation and adaptation of the concept, noting especially how he differs from his predecessors, and the new meanings he brings to the term. This chapter examines Paul's understanding of reconciliation in his Letter to the Romans through an exegetical and theological study of Rom 5:1-11. To accomplish this aim, the chapter will provide the historical and literary background of the passage. The historical background will briefly present some complex issues regarding the authorship, integrity, circumstances, and purpose of Romans, as well as the identity and character of the addressees. Next, the literary elements of Rom 5:1-11, including setting, form, and structure, will be discussed. In the exegesis, the textual study will focus on the keywords, phrases, clauses, and verses that are most essential to an understanding of Pauline reconciliation in Rom 5:1-11. Finally, important theological themes from the passage will be discussed. The aim of this chapter is to examine the theological foundation for the vertical and horizontal components of reconciliation in Paul's thought.

#### 2.1 The Historical Background of Rom 5:1-11

**Authorship, Date of Composition of Romans:** There is firm consensus among scholars that Paul authored the Letter to the Romans. Both internal and external evidence support this claim. The greeting asserts the authorship of Paul (1:1). According to Everett Harrison, the "internal



evidence is especially strong, for the language, theology and spirit are unmistakably Paul's.”<sup>57</sup> The linguistic, stylistic, literary, historical, and theological evidence are all supportive of Pauline authorship. However, other significant persons, such as Tertius (16:22) and Phoebe (16:12), may have played roles both in the writing and in the delivery and elucidation of the letter. Solid external evidence also corroborates the authenticity of Pauline authorship. According to William Wenstrom, “the early church fathers regularly included Romans in their lists of authentic documents. For example, Marcion, the Muratorian fragment, and a steady stream of patristic writers beginning with Ignatius ... assume its Pauline authorship without defense.”<sup>58</sup>

While no serious doubt has been cast on the Pauline authorship of Romans, the literary integrity of the letter, that is, whether Paul wrote all sixteen chapters of Romans as a single letter, has attracted much debate. The concern about the literary integrity of Romans has to do with the inclusion or exclusion of chapters 15-16 in some textual traditions, the placement of the doxology in 16:25-27 in different locations, and the omission of “in Rome” (1:7, 15) in some manuscripts.<sup>59</sup> These textual variants raise questions whether Romans should be seen as a composite letter. Some scholars have attended to the nitty gritty of the problem.<sup>60</sup> Many scholars think that the omission of chapters 15 and 16 can be traced to the effort to shorten the letter because of a supposed anti-Judaism of Paul, while the intention to turn a particular letter into one with more general

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<sup>57</sup> Everett Falconer Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 303.

<sup>58</sup> William E. Wenstrom, “Introduction to the Book of Romans,” accessed on August 2, 2017, [https://www.wenstrom.org/downloads/written/exposition/romans/introduction\\_romans.pdf](https://www.wenstrom.org/downloads/written/exposition/romans/introduction_romans.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/German Bible Society, 1994), 471.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Harry Gamble, *Textual History of the Letter to the Romans: A Study in Textual and Literary Criticism* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1977).

application might lie behind the omission of “in Rome” in some manuscripts.<sup>61</sup> This study presupposes the integrity of the entire epistle, as do most major commentators today.

Romans is dated between 56 and 58 CE, while Paul was at Corinth. This date is deduced from the events set forth in chapter 15. Paul had completed his mission in the eastern Mediterranean basin and wanted to move to the West (15:23-24). He planned to go to Jerusalem to deliver the collection he had taken from his churches before coming to Rome. One can infer that Paul wrote Romans when he was about to set out for Jerusalem (cf. Acts 20-21). With regard to the addressees, Paul identifies his recipients in Rom 1:7 as “all in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be saints.” While there is some ambiguity about the ethnic makeup of the recipients, I am among those who think the letter was addressed to both Jewish and Gentile Christians.

**The Purpose of Romans:** The purpose of Romans remains a largely contested issue among scholars. The issue at stake is whether or not Paul’s letter addressed a particular problem in the churches in Rome. Three important voices are easily discernible in the on-going debate on the purpose of Romans. The first group are those who see Romans as Paul’s compendium of Christian faith which has no particular situational affinity. The second group thinks Paul’s purpose was simply missionary.<sup>62</sup> From this perspective, Paul is travelling to Rome in order to seek the help of Christians there in view of his upcoming mission to Spain; consequently, he writes them to introduce himself and to give a summary of his gospel.<sup>63</sup> The third group sees Romans as a pastoral letter which addresses the existential needs of the Christian communities in Rome, especially the relation between Jews and Gentiles and their coexistence in the mysterious plan of God.

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<sup>61</sup> For a more comprehensive contemporary treatment of this argument, see Richard N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul’s Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 15-42.

<sup>62</sup> See Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 10-11.

<sup>63</sup> Charles Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans Vol. 2*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 814-823.

It is important to understand the historical background that informs the third perspective. According to historical sources, in 49CE, there was dispute among leading Jews in Rome that led to the banishing of some from Rome by Emperor Claudius. Suetonius wrote that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome, since they were constantly in rebellion, at the instigation of Chrestus<sup>64</sup> — a misspelling of *Christus*. The uprising in Rome seems to have had something to do with intra-Jewish debate (between believers and non-believers in Christ) over Christ's messiahship. Understanding the effects of this expulsion on the Roman churches will help one in constructing the purpose of Romans. James Walters lists the three most important effects: (a) with the Jewish expulsion, what used to be a synagogue-based community turned into a network of house churches with new administrative positions; (b) a previously predominant Jewish community with Gentiles who lived like Jews became a dominantly Gentile community; and (c) there was a movement in the latter towards becoming an independent entity, distinct from Jewish religious patterns.<sup>65</sup> Upon their return to Rome after the death of Claudius in 54 CE, the Jewish Christians were faced with these new circumstances, which according to Walters, had potential for conflict.<sup>66</sup> Constantineau notes also that “the social, ethnic and cultural diversity of Rome, which resulted in a similar diversity in the churches in Rome, led to different understandings and practices of the gospel, with different and competing forms of leadership, and different stances vis-à-vis other believers and outsiders.”<sup>67</sup> Internal evidence of disunity and differences among the Jewish and Gentile Christians in the letter (2:17-29; 3:27; 9-11; 14:1-15:13) provide support for this argument.

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<sup>64</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, (ed. Catharine Edwards; New York: Oxford, 2000), 184.

<sup>65</sup> James C. Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul's letter to the Romans: Changing Self-Definitions in Earliest Roman Christianity* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993), 56-66.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 63-64.

<sup>67</sup> Constantineau, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 102.

Paul would have known this situation through some of his friends in Rome. This explains his interest in the rhetoric of reconciliation between the Jews and the Gentiles throughout the letter. Paul exhorts the community to work toward reconciliation and peace at every level: between themselves and God, and between Jews and Gentiles. He encourages them to “pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (14:19). In fact, the major theological themes that Paul developed in Romans have the unity of Jews and Gentiles as their ultimate goals. For instance, core themes such as God’s covenant faithfulness, justification by faith, reconciliation, the Holy Spirit and sanctification, the salvation-historical priority of the Jews, and the co-existence of the weak and the strong were all applied to the Jew-Gentile relationship.

In conclusion, one can say that Paul does not have just one purpose in writing Romans. Paul was concerned about the prospective Spanish mission and needed the assistance of the Roman Christians. Consequently, he writes to them to introduce himself and his gospel. However, Paul was aware of the conflicts and divisions within these house churches. He addresses these issues, knowing that these phenomena were not only incongruent with the core gospel of Christ he proclaims, but also that they would also pose a difficulty for his mission in Spain. The mission motive is a natural reason for Paul to write; however, the pastoral motive is the more immediate goal of the letter.

## **2.2 The Literary Elements Rom 5:1-11**

**Literary Setting:** Scholars disagree on the exact place of chapter 5 in the structure of Romans. Should it be read as a conclusion to Paul’s argument set forth in 1:18-4:25, or is it the beginning of a new section of his thought that continues to 8:39? This structural problem arose as a result of the linguistic and thematic affinities of chapter 5 with the preceding chapters, as well as with the chapters that follow. As Constantineau observes: “there are (1) those who take ch. 5 as a

conclusion of the larger section of chs. 1-5; (2) those who take ch. 5 as a bridge between the sections, with ch. 5:1-11 belonging to chs. 1-4 and 5:12-21 to chs. 6-8; (3) those who take ch. 5 as an introduction to chs. 5-8.”<sup>68</sup> Each group cites lexical evidence to support its claim. While recognizing the linguistic affinity of chapter 5 and chapters 1-4, I side with those scholars<sup>69</sup> who see chapter 5 as the beginning of a new section (5:1-8:39) that is concerned with sanctification through the Spirit.

The rationales for this placement include: (1) The opening clause: Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως (“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith”) signals a summary of the theological argument of 1:18-4:25, and prepares for the presentation of a new message that follows, “we have peace” (5:2-8:39). (2) Content: Cranfield finds a correlation with the content of chapters 5-8; these four chapters have a similar structure in which the first sub-sections of each chapter draw out the meaning of justification as: reconciliation (5:1-11), sanctification (6:1-14), freedom from the law (7:1-6), and being indwelt by the Spirit (8:1-11). The second subsection in each chapter, according to Cranfield, expounds what has already been said in the first subsection.<sup>70</sup> (3) Vocabulary: there is a major shift from the forensic πιστ- (faith/faithfulness) and δικ- (righteousness) terminology of 1:16-4:25 (33 times) to an emphasis on more relational and pastoral terminology, such as reconciliation, love, peace, life/live in 5:1-8:39. In addition, the key words that appear in 5:1-11 (love, glory, hope, and endurance) are found in 8:18-39, indicating the unity of chapters 5-8. (4) The formulae “through our Lord Jesus Christ,” “though Jesus Christ our Lord” and “in/by Christ

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<sup>68</sup> Constantineau, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 116.

<sup>69</sup> Charles E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 2 vols. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 1:252-254; Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 539-547.

<sup>70</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:254.

Jesus our Lord,” which occurs three times in chapter 5, is found at the end of chapters 6, 7, and 8. This refrain, according to Cranfield, “has the effect of binding the four chapters together.”<sup>71</sup>

Romans 5 itself is divided into two major sections: 5:1-11 and 5:12-21. The first section is primarily concerned with the new relationship that Christians enjoy because of their justification and reconciliation with God. This unit is further divided into three sub-units: (a) the believer’s peace with God even in the midst of suffering (vv. 1-5); (b) the assurance of God’s reconciling love through the death of Christ (vv. 6-8); and (c) the role of Christ in effecting justification, reconciliation, and salvation (vv. 9-11). In the second section (5:12-21), Paul discusses two different ages inaugurated by Adam and Jesus.

**Literary Form:** In Rom 5:1-11, Paul employs the technique of epideictic rhetoric, “a genre in which the author celebrates a common value with the readers.”<sup>72</sup> Paul used this rhetoric here to reinforce the relationship between himself and his audience that he sought to establish in 1:1-15, and to celebrate the unity that believers have as a result of their justification/ reconciliation with God and with one another. Patricia McDonald affirms:

in this pericope, the Christians in Rome are no longer viewed as typical groups (Jew and Gentiles), as was the case in 1:18-4:25. Nor are they being considered as components of an all-inclusive but still impersonal *pantes* as they were in 3:21-26. Instead, in 5:1-11, Paul speaks for the first time in Romans of the life that he and the Roman believers share as Christians.<sup>73</sup>

The argument for an epideictic form is supported by Paul’s frequent use of the first person plural, in contrast to the second person plural that dominates chapters 1-4. Romans 5:1-11 contains nineteen first person plural pronouns (we, our, and us): verse 1 (2x), verse 2 (3x), verse 3 (1x), verse 5 (2x), verse 6 (1x), verse 8 (3x), verse 9 (2x), verse 10 (3x), and verse 11 (2x). The use of

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 1:254.

<sup>72</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 1996), 23.

<sup>73</sup> Patricia McDonald, “Romans 5:1-11 as a Rhetorical Bridge,” JNST 40 (1990): 86.

the first person plural in 5:1-11 expresses not only Paul's intention to unite with his audience in their common faith, but also the inclusive language that will describe the new family of believers who are reconciled with God. As Thomas Stegman suggests, "Paul's use of the first person plural pronouns throughout verses 1-11 implies that reconciliation and peace are experienced within the family of faith, the Gentile-plus-Jew family promised to Abraham (4:9-17)."<sup>74</sup>

In verses 9-10, Paul employs a literary device known as *a fortiori* argument (from the lesser to the greater). This form of argumentation pre-dates Paul. Ten instances of it are found in the Old Testament, and more appear in the rabbinic writings. In this context, Paul's argument is that since God has already done a very difficult thing—justifying the ungodly and sinners—God will also do the comparatively easier work of saving them from God's wrath at the end of the ages. Verses 9-10 are parallel. They reiterate the whole idea of verses 1-8. "Justified by his blood" echoes Rom 3:25-26, while "reconciled to him through the death of his Son" appears here for the first time. The point is that Paul uses two metaphors, justification and reconciliation, to communicate an essential part of his soteriology—"saved" (vv. 9, 10). The triple repetition of *καυχάομαι* (boast) in verses 2, 3, 11 affirms the doxological character of the section. The refrain "through our Lord Jesus Christ" in verse 11 forms an *inclusio* with its first appearance in 5:1.

### **The Structure of the Text**

Romans 5:1-11 is structured as follows:

*The Benefits of Justification/Salvation (vv. 1-5)*

Peace with God (vv. 1-2)

God's purpose in suffering (vv. 3-4)

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<sup>74</sup> Thomas D. Stegman, "Romans," in *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*, (eds. E. Aguilar et al.; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, forthcoming 2018). Further references to this work are taken from the passages in question.

The outpouring of God's love through the Spirit (v. 5)

*Christ's Death as the Manifestation of God's Love (vv. 6-8)*

Christ died for the ungodly (v. 6)

The lesser human love (v. 7)

The greater love of God (v. 8)

*The Role of Christ in Effecting Justification, Reconciliation, and Salvation (vv. 9-11)*

Justified by the blood of Christ (v.9)

Reconciled and saved through the death of Christ (vv.10-11)

### **2.3 Textual Analysis of Rom 5:1-11**

In Rom 5:1-11, Paul presents a theological treatment of the implications of justification by faith (5:1-5), and expounds upon God's salvific and reconciling love revealed through Jesus' death (vv. 6–11). In this pericope, Paul argues that the life of those who have been made righteous by faith is explicitly characterized by peace and reconciliation with God ("we have peace with God," v. 1; "we were reconciled to God," ... "having been reconciled to God," v. 10; "we have now received reconciliation," v. 11), and is implicitly characterized by peace and reconciliation with others. Using the concept of peace and reconciliation throughout the passage, Paul explains the way in which the amazing love of God in Christ has transformed sinful humanity from being God's enemies into being at peace with God. For Paul, "God's reconciling initiative by the death of Christ... becomes not only the very act and pronouncement of reconciliation of humanity with God but also the ground and model for reconciling relationships among peoples."<sup>75</sup> Again, Paul's intensive use of the first person plural pronoun in the text suggests that reconciliation is not just a private or personal inner experience; it also has a communal dimension.

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<sup>75</sup> Constantineau. *Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 130.



### **The Benefits of Justification/Salvation (vv. 1-5)**

*Peace with God* (vv. 1-2): The phrase δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως (“Therefore, since we are justified by faith”) gathers up Paul’s message of justification that runs through 1:16-4:25. Paul’s argument there is that both Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith and not by observance of the Jewish law. The interpretative history of “justification by faith” has been a divisive issue since the Reformation.<sup>76</sup> To understand the concept, especially as Paul applies it to God’s justice and righteousness, or to God’s justification of sinners, one needs to understand the meaning the term connotes in the Jewish Scriptures, because Paul’s usage of the term depends on it. The English terms “justice” and “righteousness”<sup>77</sup> come from the same Greek δίκαιο- family of words (δικαιοσύνη, δίκαιος, δικαιόω, etc.). The basic meaning of this word group is “to vindicate,” “to acquit,” “to make right” or “to put in a right relationship.” Δικαιοσύνη (justification/righteousness) is used to translate the Hebrew term צְדָקָה (*tsedeq*), which connotes communal responsibility or being faithful to the community, and evokes a sense of covenantal relationship. To be righteous means that one keeps the covenant commitment. When *tsedeq* is used in reference to God in the Hebrew Bible, it is understood as God’s faithfulness to God’s covenant with the Israelites, which is expressed in God’s salvation, deliverance, and vindication of God’s people.

In Paul’s theology, God’s righteousness is essentially God’s covenant faithfulness which is revealed in Jesus’ faithful death on the cross and his resurrection, an act by which God, while remaining in covenant faithfulness to Israel, opens up the door of salvation to Gentiles. Believers

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<sup>76</sup> Traditional Catholics emphasize that justification is both an acquittal and a transformational making righteous, while Protestants contend that justification is imputed or credited to a sinner through faith alone. From the “New Perspective,” justification is seen as God’s righteous way of including all peoples into the family of God through the Christ event. I agree with the latter interpretation.

<sup>77</sup> Note that in English, justice and righteousness come from different word group: the “just” family (just, justice, justification, justify, etc.) and the “right” family (right, righteous, righteousness, etc.), whereas in Greek and Hebrew these two terms belong to the same word group. The problem here is that while Greek and Hebrew suggest the interconnectedness of these terms, English distinguishes them, thereby obscuring the close linguistic and theological ties within this family of words.

are justified through πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, (Rom 3:21-26). This study adopts a subjective interpretation of the genitive, that is, “the faithfulness of Jesus of Christ,” rather than the objective genitive interpretation (i.e., faith in Jesus Christ). The subjective genitive interpretation shifts the emphasis from the justification of individuals through their faith in Jesus Christ to saying that the possibility of a righteous/justified people has been achieved through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, who was obedient to God’s will. This is the meaning inherent in the phrase “the righteousness of God is revealed ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν (“through faith for faith”), (1:17). God’s righteousness has been revealed “through (ἐκ) the faith of Jesus,” and in turn “leads (εἰς) to the faith of Christians.” Support for the above interpretation is found in 5:16-19, where Paul writes that it was through the righteous act (δικαιώματος) of one man (Jesus Christ) that many were made righteous. Jesus’ sacrificial death is the faithful/intentional offering he makes of himself. It is his faithfulness to God that reveals God’s way of making human beings righteous. Jesus’ faithful response to God creates the possibility and disposition of believers to respond in the same faithful way to God. God makes righteous the one who participates in the faithfulness of Jesus.

I agree with Michael Gorman that “Paul understands justification as participatory transformation in the justice of God in Christ that creates a just people.”<sup>78</sup> Gorman argues that justification is “brought about by death—Christ’s death for us in the past and our death with him in the present, all due to God’s initiative and grace. Those who are justified—who are in Christ—will be conformed to his covenantal faithfulness and love.”<sup>79</sup> In Paul’s theology, God’s justification of the unjust is God’s gracious reconciliation of God’s enemies, which in turn calls for a human response of faith. The response of living faith is exemplified by Abraham, who

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<sup>78</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 228.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 228.

believed that God could bring life out of his dead body (Rom 4:19).<sup>80</sup> According to Gorman, Abraham's faith is self-involving and participatory.<sup>81</sup> Abraham is therefore a model for those who believe that God can regenerate new life of justice/righteousness out of their old/dead lives of sinfulness, ungodliness, and unrighteousness through the power of the Spirit. For Paul, God's power to re-create life in the present was demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The above participatory understanding of justification is supported by Paul's list of the implications of justification by faith. The first implication of justification in 5:1 is "peace with God" (εἰρήνην ἔχομεν [ἔχομεν] πρὸς τὸν θεόν). Scholars differ on how the main verb of verse 1 should be read. Some argue for the indicative ἔχομεν ("we have peace with God"), while others argue for the subjunctive ἔχωμεν ("let us have peace with God"). Even though the indicative has good textual witness, the subjunctive has stronger textual witnesses.<sup>82</sup> Longenecker notes that "the Church Fathers were almost unanimous in reading the verb as a subjective (ἔχωμεν), and thus understood Paul as exhorting the Christians at Rome to take some type of action in their lives."<sup>83</sup> Robert Jewett argues that given the situation in Rome, with difficult relationships between Jew and Gentile Christians, the exhortation "let us have peace" makes sense.<sup>84</sup> The subjunctive reading implies that Paul's exhortation to make peace with God also entails his exhorting the factious parties in Rome to be at peace with one another.

Despite the abundant external textual support for the subjunctive, Bruce Metzger affirms that most contemporary commentators and interpreters argue for the indicative on the basis of

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 278.

<sup>81</sup> Paul's use of the term νεκρωμένον implies that Abraham was functionally dead due to age. His faith was that God can create life (an offspring) out of their (Abraham and Sarah's) seemingly dead bodies.

<sup>82</sup> Textual evidence for the indicative include: §<sup>1</sup> B<sup>2</sup> F G P Ψ 104 365 1241 1739<sup>c</sup>, etc., while the textual evidence for the subjunctive include: § A B C D E K L 33 81 630 1175 1739 Or<sup>int</sup> Marcion, etc.

<sup>83</sup> Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 554.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 348.

context and theology.<sup>85</sup> From this perspective, Paul is stating a fact that the justified have peace with God. The argument is that since chapter 5 is listing the benefits of justification, it is more likely that Paul is describing the situation of the justified rather than exhorting them to be at peace with God. In other words, Paul is saying that the enmity between human beings and God has ended. There is now peace between God and humans, because God has reconciled us to Godself through the death of Jesus Christ. Secondly, since the peace to which Paul refers in 5:1 equals the reconciliation that he describes in 5:10-11, the context favors the indicative reading, as reconciliation is something that God effects for humanity and not something that humanity does for itself. Even though I agree with the indicative reading, I do not think the two interpretations are in conflict. Peace with God must manifest itself in harmonious relationship within the community, as Paul emphasizes in 12:1-15:13. Paul's understanding of peace is rooted in the Hebrew word *shalom*, which embraces the experience of completeness, soundness, welfare, security, tranquility, and felicity with God, nature, self, and others. Paul's concept of peace differs from the Greco-Roman understanding of peace in the sense that his origin of peace, the basis for it, and the means of procuring and preserving it stood in sharp contrast to the common perspective of his own day.<sup>86</sup> The peace which Paul describes contrasts and outshines its imperial counterparts, because it is a peace achieved through the sacrificial death of Christ rather than through the sword. *Shalom* does not describe a world of conquerors and conquered, but a world where everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive. Situations in which there may not be overt violence, yet in which some people are exploited, subordinated, or even excluded from the common good, both spiritual and material, do not depict *shalom* peace. *Shalom* captures God's eschatological vision for all

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<sup>85</sup> Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A companion volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 452.

<sup>86</sup> Edward M. Keazirian, *Peace and Peacemaking in Paul and the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 83.

creation. So whether one reads “we have peace” or “let us have peace,” one has to keep in mind this *shalom* of wholeness and justice.

In verse 2, Paul states that believers “have obtained (ἐσχήκαμεν) access (τὴν προσαγωγή) into grace (εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην) in which we now stand (ἐν ᾗ ἐστήκαμεν),” and that believers “boast in the hope of sharing the glory of God (καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ).” What this statement means is that the justified are now enjoying God’s grace of justification which they could not have attained on their own effort, but access to this state was given to them through Christ. Consequently, believers can now boast in the hope of God’s glory. The noun “access” (προσαγωγή) calls to mind a person’s approach to a king in the Greco-Roman world, and in the LXX one’s approach to the altar of God with an offering (Lev 4:14). The understanding here is that the believers’ (Jews and Gentiles) access to God is by pure grace. In this way, Paul legitimizes the membership of the Gentiles into the community of God’s people (cf. Eph 2:13-18). The use of the perfect tense verb ἐστήκαμεν (“we have stood”) implies that this is an ongoing experience of divine grace. Paul’s emphasis is that the Christ-event has created for human beings the possibility of being in the presence of God, of encountering and growing in intimacy with God that has transformative effects in the life of the believer. These effects include boasting in the glory of God, as against boasting in oneself (3:27).

*God’s purpose in human suffering* (vv. 3-4): Paul stresses that believers boast in the afflictions that beset them as Christians (2 Cor 1:4; 2:4; 4:17; 7:4; 8:2) because affliction enables believers to progress higher in the ethical life (vv. 3b-4). Paul sets a pyramid of virtue which suffering brings in the Christian life. The climax is a non-circumvented hope, a hope that will not be disappointed because God’s own love has been poured into the hearts of believers through the Spirit (v. 5). In Christ, suffering has lost its power of humiliation; it is now a prelude to glory. The

implications of justification are not only peace with and access to God, but also a participation in the redemptive suffering of Christ.

*The outpouring of God's love through the Spirit* (v. 5): This verse begins with the phrase ἡ δὲ ἐλπίς οὐ καταισχύνει (“hope does not disappoint”). Hope here is hope in God (15:13). This phrase is reminiscent of certain expressions in the LXX (Ps 21:5-6; 30:2; 24:20; Jer 31:13) in which hope placed in God does not disappoint. Ordinarily, sufferings and trials of life lead to despondency, but in Christ suffering leads to eschatological hope. The reason hope does not disappoint is because “the love of God has been poured into our heart through the Spirit.” Paul’s use of ἐκκέχυται (“pour out”) recalls God’s eschatological promise in Ezek 11:19; 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-32 that was fulfilled in Acts 2:17. God’s love (ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ) is the indiscriminate, unconditional, and self-giving love of God by which God seeks the interest and welfare of all God’s creatures. The pouring out of God’s love in the heart (the deepest center of the human person) of the believers through the divine Spirit implies that believers not only have the abundance of God’s love in their lives, but also can participate in the same indiscriminate, unconditional, and self-giving love of God. The inclusion of love as a benefit of justification points also to the relational and horizontal aspect of justification/reconciliation. God’s own love demonstrated in God’s giving of God’s own Son (cf. v. 6) is the foundation of loving and inclusive relationships within the Christian community. Constantineau notes that by bringing these themes (justice, peace, glory, suffering, endurance, hope, character, Holy Spirit, and love) “together in Rom. 5:1-5, Paul expresses his understanding of the intrinsic relationship that exists between

justification by faith and a Christian life of peace/reconciliation and love—both fundamentally centered in, and shaped by, the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.”<sup>87</sup>

In the next subsection, verses 6-11, Paul provides the theological and Christological foundation of his theology of reconciliation/justification. The central theme of the section is that in response to humanity’s enmity to God, God has acted in love to reconcile humanity with Godself and has given us the gift of reconciliation.

### **Christ Death as the manifestation of God’s Love (vv. 6-8)**

In this passage, Paul accentuates God’s love for his enemies by making a contrast between God’s sacrificial love and human love. Frank Matera discusses three movements in this subunit: “First, Paul reminds the Romans of what they already know: that Christ died for them (5:6). Second, he explains the extraordinary nature of God’s love (5:7). Finally, he equates Christ’s love for them with God’s love for them (5:8).”<sup>88</sup>

*Christ died for the ungodly* (v. 6): The word ἔτι (“still”) begins this section. Its purpose is to explicate that it was while we were still helplessly trapped in sin, and thus against God, that Christ died for us. In verse 8, Paul uses the same adverb (ἔτι) before ἀμαρτωλῶν to reiterate once more the sinful state of humanity into which God’s love intervened in the human situation. For Paul, this is the highest revelation of God’s love and righteousness. In verse 6, Paul argues that God makes this demonstration of love through the death of Christ:

1. While we were still helpless (ἄσθενῶν)
2. At the appointed time
3. Died for the ungodly

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<sup>87</sup> Constantineau, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 126.

<sup>88</sup> Matera, *Romans*, 133.

These three points summarize Paul's gospel: (1) while we were ἀσθενῶν describes one's state of limited capacity to do or be something, and is used literally as physical weakness, and figuratively as weakness in the spiritual arena and thus one's powerlessness to produce results.<sup>89</sup> Paul's focus here is on humanity as ἀσθενής (weak) in the spiritual sense—the human person from Paul's perspective was incapable of liberating himself/herself from the captivity of sin (cf. 7:7-25). William Sanday and Arthur Headlam write that ἀσθενής in 5:6 means “incapable of working out any righteousness for ourselves.”<sup>90</sup> The verse points to humans' susceptibility to sin, their powerlessness to gain justification by works without the grace of God (cf. Rom 3:19-4:25). For Paul, one of the implications of the sin of Adam is an ontological weakening of the human will to pursue righteousness. Humanity faces the predicament of not being able to do good (7:19). This weakness is in contrast to the transforming power that the gospel effects for all who believe. In Rom 4:9, Paul describes Abraham's faith in terms of not growing weak, and in chapters 14-15, he uses “weakness” to negotiate the divisions among the Roman Christians.<sup>91</sup>

(2) “At the right time” (κατὰ καιρὸν): Matera highlights two possible meanings of this phrase. It can be taken with what precedes, thereby giving the sense that the right time was when we were weak, or it can also be taken with what follows, giving the meaning that Christ died at the right moment appointed by God.<sup>92</sup> Others have argued from a historical perspective, interpreting the right time to mean (a) the Roman peace (and roads) allowing free travel, (b) the Greek language allowing cross-cultural communication, or (c) the demise of the Greek and Roman

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<sup>89</sup> Precept Austin, “Commentary on Romans Part 1,” accessed August 16, 2017 [http://www.preceptaustin.org/romans\\_56-11.htm](http://www.preceptaustin.org/romans_56-11.htm).

<sup>90</sup> William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), 127.

<sup>91</sup> Rafael Rodriguez, *If You Call Yourself a Jew: Rephrasing Paul's letter to the Romans* (Eugene: Cascade, 2014), 101.

<sup>92</sup> Matera, *Romans*, 133.



gods producing an expectant, spiritually hungry world.<sup>93</sup> I think the meaning of this referenced time can be deciphered from its occurrence in Scripture, especially in other Pauline letters. In Gal 4:4-6, Paul expresses the same idea: “when the fullness of time has come, God sent his Son.” One can conclude, then, that the right time refers to Matera’s second proposed meaning above. It is the fullness of time from God's perspective (cf. Rom 3:26; 13:11). “The thought is that there is nothing delayed about Christ's death.... In other words, the atoning sacrifice of God's Son was not an afterthought, but was the manner in which God from eternity past had determined He would deal with man’s sin and which was accomplished when He chose to do so.”<sup>94</sup>

(3) “Died for the ungodly” (ὕπερ ἀσεβῶν ἀπέθανεν): the verb ἀποθνήσκω refers to the natural death of people in which there is the separation of the soul from the physical body. Out of its 111 occurrences in the New Testament, Paul uses it 42 times to refer to Christ’s death for sinners or to the Christian’s death to sin. For Paul, what Christ experienced was not a coma, a diminished consciousness, or a near death. It was a real death, and his death was on behalf of (ὕπερ) the ungodly (ἀσεβῶν). Ὑπέρ appears three times in Rom 5:6-8, and in each instance it refers to Christ’s death as a substitution. Verse 6 describes those on whose behalf Christ died as the ἀσεβῶν, a term that refers to one who has no fear and reverence for God or holy things. The ungodly may not necessarily be irreligious, but their actions are in opposition to God’s precepts. Paul employs this term in Rom 1:18 to refer to impious/wicked people against whom God’s anger is being revealed, and in 3:18 he gives a word portrait of the attitude of the ungodly. One recurrent point Paul makes is that it is the ungodly whom God justifies (Rom 4:5). In this passage, these are the people on

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<sup>93</sup> Bob Utley “The Gospel According to Paul: Romans”  
<http://www.triblio.org/freebiblecommentary/pdf/EN/VOL05.pdf> (accessed 08/17/2017).

<sup>94</sup> Austin, “Commentary on Romans Part 1.”

whose behalf Christ died and whom God is reconciling to Godself through the death of Christ. This is the highest demonstration of divine love.

In order to underscore the magnitude of God's love for us in verse 7, Paul employs a human analogy and so makes a contrast of the highest expression of human love with the supremely merciful/love of God. The insight here is that the highest expression of human love, which can motivate a person to die for someone else, is deficient in itself because of self-interest, but God's love expressed in the death of Christ lacks self-interest. It is a supremely pure and merciful love.

*The lesser human love* (v. 7): Pauline scholars do not agree on the distinction Paul intends to make between the "righteous" (δικαίος) person and the "good" (ἀγαθός) one. What is important is that Paul uses "righteous" here in the general sense of an upright person, not in the theological sense of a person made right with God. The case Paul makes is that it is unlikely that anyone would actually sacrifice one's life for someone who is merely ethically upright, but one could consider doing so for a benevolent/generous person. This sort of self-sacrifice is conditioned and spurred by what has been gained from the benefactor.

*The greater love of God* (v. 8): In verse 8, Paul argues for the superiority of God's love in that it was while we were still sinners and antagonistic toward God that Christ died for us. Here Paul uses another adjective ("sinner") to describe the people for whom Christ died. Ἀμαρτωλός means to deviate, to miss the mark. It is used to describe "those who are continually erring from the way, constantly missing God's mark, those who live in opposition to the perfect will of God."<sup>95</sup> It also connotes the idea of moral wickedness and consequent exposure to divine wrath. The unique character of Christ's death is revealed in that he died for people who are opposed to God. Another

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<sup>95</sup> Austin, "Commentary on Romans Part 1."

decisive argument Paul makes in verse 8 is that the death of Christ is a “demonstration” of God’s love for sinners (cf. John 3:16). The centrality of Paul’s theology in verses 6-8 is God’s love for sinners in the person of God’s Son, a love demonstrated in a complete act of self-giving.

### **Christ’s Role in Effecting Justification, Reconciliation, and Salvation (vv. 5:9-11)**

Paul’s argument for the magnanimous love of God (vv. 6-8) reaches its summit in verses 9-11. The love of God which was made manifest in the death of Christ introduces Christian believers to a broad vista of resultant benefits. Paul now employs the Jewish *qal wa-homer*, or the Latin *a maioris ad maius rhetoric* (argument from the greater to lesser), to inspire confidence that God is trustworthy to complete the work of salvation already begun. Paul focuses on the role of Christ’s sacrificial death in effecting justification, reconciliation, and salvation. He invites his readers to boast in the gift of reconciliation that they have received.

*Justified by the blood of Christ* (v. 9): Paul’s argument in verse 9 is that since believers are “justified” (δικαιωθέντες) by the blood of Christ (greater), they will certainly be saved from God’s wrath (lesser) which will be poured out on the ungodly and unrighteous (1:18). In this verse, Paul returns to the theme of justification. Previously, Paul writes that we are justified by God’s grace (3:24) and we are justified by faith (3:28). Here, justification comes through Christ’s blood. Paul brings into view the role played by the blood of Christ in effecting justification/reconciliation. This verse evokes the Jewish cultic imagery of sacrifice, where blood is believed to have expiatory value. Christ’s sacrificial offering (cf. 3:25) is the means through which God has shown mercy, making it possible for God to show mercy righteously.

*Reconciled and saved through the death of Christ* (vv. 10-11): The key word in verse 10 is *κατηλλάγημεν* (“we were reconciled”). The term is brought into Paul’s argument following his repeated reference to the historical proof of God’s love, namely the death of Christ. For Paul, God’s love is demonstrated by the nature of those for whom Christ died. In this verse, *ἐχθροί* is understood to mean enemies of God (Rom 8:7). In the New Testament, *ἐχθρός* is used to express personal enmity in the various relationships of everyday life.<sup>96</sup> In its active sense, as it is used here, it connotes the idea of hostility, hatred, and animosity toward someone. It is the opposite of love and friendship. For Paul, human beings trapped in sin were hostile to God (Rom 1:18-23, 7:28; Phil 3:18; Col 1:21). The notion of reconciliation signifies the end of the hostility. There is now a change in the relationship between human beings and God that is marked by love and friendship.

Four things need to be emphasized in this verse: (a) Reconciliation is first and foremost the work of God. God is the initiator of the act of reconciliation with the whole of humanity. This point is expressed by the passive voice (“we were reconciled”).<sup>97</sup> (b) The means by which reconciliation was achieved was through the death of Christ (cf. Col 1:20). This point recalls Rom 8:31-32: “He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us.” This text shows the extent God goes to show love to God’s enemies (John 3:16), and points to Jesus’ intentional self-giving love and faithfulness to the point of death. (c) The first result of reconciliation is the assurance that believers will be saved. Paul’s twofold *a minori ad maius* argument points to the

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<sup>96</sup> Werner Foerster, “*ἐχθρός, ἔχθρα*” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Vol. II* (ed. Gerhard Kittel; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 813.

<sup>97</sup> *κατηλλάγημεν* is the first person plural aorist passive indicative form of *καταλλάσσω*. When a verb occurred in a passive voice, the subject is not the one performing the action; instead, the subject is being acted upon by an agent. The passive voice here indicates that reconciliation occurred as a result of a force (God) outside of and independent of the subject (we/humans). Though reconciliation is God’s initiative, the means through which God effected it is Christ’s death, hence it is known as the divine passive.

fact that God, who went so far as to reconcile enemies through the death of his Son (greater), will definitely save those who are now God's friends through his Son (lesser). (d) The temporal participle καταλλαγέντες shows that reconciliation is an act that occurred in the past, which also has an effect on the present and on the future. One effect is the ongoing work of (horizontal) reconciliation.

In verse 11, Paul states that believers “even boast in God (καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ) through Christ, through whom we have received reconciliation.” While in verses 1-5 Paul presents “boast in God” as a result of justification, in verses 6-11 “boast in God” is the second result of having been reconciled with God, and Christ is the one through whom (διὰ τοῦ κυρίου) we boast in God. Boasting in God is the attitude of reconciled believers: “we boast in Christ Jesus and do not put our confidence in flesh” (Phil 3:1, 3). It contrasts with Jewish boasting about the Mosaic Law and “covenantal nomism” (Rom 2:17, 23), and the implied boasting by Christians about the correctness/superiority of Christian doctrines. It means giving glory to God, in contrast to sinful humanity denying God (Rom. 1:18-23). The final phrase δι’ οὗ νῦν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν (“through whom we have received reconciliation”) sets Christ as the agent of believers’ reconciliation with God. Both καταλλαγὴν and ἐλάβομεν are in the aorist tense (completed action) and serve as a final reminder that believers have truly received God’s gift of reconciliation. It is a gift in service of the whole *ekklesia* that Paul developed broadly in 2 Cor. 5:18-21.

## **2.4 The Theology of Rom 5:1-11**

*The relationship between justification and reconciliation:* When Paul looks back at the Christ-event (the complex of decisive moments of the earthly and risen life of Christ, especially his passion, death, resurrection, and glorification through which humanity received salvation), he

speaks about it via various metaphors. In this passage, Paul uses the language of justification and reconciliation, which have an overlapping conceptual meaning, to explain how God's offer of salvation, to Jews and Gentiles (all humanity) on an equal basis, was accomplished, as well as the implications of this salvation for both vertical and horizontal levels. Although some scholars have maintained a distinction between these two metaphors, Stanley Porter affirms that these concepts overlap semantically and each highlight a different aspect of the same work of God. Porter's view seems to capture Paul's intention as he skillfully links the two terms in verses 1, 9, and 10 in order to show their interrelatedness.<sup>98</sup> As this exegesis has shown, both justification and reconciliation must be understood "within a wider covenantal, relational, participatory, and transformational framework."<sup>99</sup> Through the covenant, God established a relationship with Israel that requires a certain response. In Romans, Paul was concerned with how Gentiles could also have a relationship with God, and with the meaning of this vertical relationship for the horizontal relationships of Jews and Gentiles. So for Paul, justification and reconciliation are more social and ethnic than individual and private experiences. Both terms express God's salvific and redemptive work through Christ, and envision a transformation of human relationships through the divine Spirit.

*God as the foundation of reconciliation:* Romans 5:1-11 reveals the theological basis of Christian reconciliation. God is the agent of the act of reconciliation with the whole of humanity. Throughout the text God is the actor, while humanity is the recipient of God's gracious actions. God is the one who initiated a plan to remove the hostility between God and human beings. God's reconciling action reveals God's love/righteousness, because it is God, the offended party, who takes the initiative to offer reconciliation to those who wronged God. This reveals the faithfulness

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<sup>98</sup> Porter, *καταλλάσσω in Ancient Greek Literature*, 155.

<sup>99</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2009), 55.

of God to the eternal salvific plan, even when human beings blocked their hearts against him. Despite human sins, God has remained faithful in God's love for humanity. The result of reconciliation is that there is now a transformation in the divine-human relationship. The reconciled who have experienced the peace of the Spirit can now have communion of love with God, and can become active participants in God's reconciling mission.

*The reconciling role of Christ:* God's reconciliation with humanity was accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ. Christ's redemption as the mediating dynamic of reconciliation in Rom 5:11 is also noted Col 1:20 and 2 Cor 5:18, 19. That God could go as far as to give up God's only Son is proof that God holds nothing back in revealing love for us. But at the same time, the death of Christ reveals Christ's faithfulness to God and his self-giving love for humanity. Jesus' sacrificial death is a faithful/intentional offering he makes of himself so that there is a redemptive basis for sinners to be reconciled with God. In Rom 5:18-19, Paul states that it was through the obedience of one man (Jesus Christ) that many were made righteous. Jesus' life and death not only mediate reconciliation between God and humans, but also create the possibility of faithfulness in believers, enabling the new life that results in peace with God and with others.

*The pneumatological dimension of reconciliation:* In Pauline theology, the Spirit is the principle of relationship, not only between the Father and the Son, but also among believers. In Romans, Paul portrays the Holy Spirit as God's power to bring about transformation and newness of life in believers. The Spirit is the same creative Spirit who hovered over the chaos at creation, bringing order and form to realities, that "now transforms the broken shards of our humanity into a new creation."<sup>100</sup> It is the Spirit who creates peace, unity, and harmonious existence in the

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<sup>100</sup> Mark Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual and Social Perspectives* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 42.

community through his gifts. In Romans, there is a dynamism of the Spirit dwelling in the believer and the believer dwelling in the Spirit that enhances reconciling practices.

*The human dimension:* God's initiative to enact reconciliation necessarily leads to human co-operation and participation. This is because the vertical relationship is inextricably linked the with horizontal relationship. To be sure, Turner opines that "individuals cannot experience reconciliation with God apart from faith in the proclamation of the messianic mediation of the Father's gracious initiative."<sup>101</sup> But once this message is accepted, it needs to be embodied. Human beings—individuals and community (i.e., the Church)—are to be signs of God's reconciliation in the world. This entails a life of love, forgiveness, unity, and peace with God, with fellow human beings, and with the entire creation. It is only when human beings accept this message and live it that the kingdom of God will be fully realized. This is the meaning inherent in the vertical and horizontal dimensions of reconciliation in the Letter to the Romans.

## **Conclusion**

Reconciliation and unity are at the heart of Paul's gospel. In this chapter, we have shown that while Paul's missionary concerns informed his writing of Romans, it is the pastoral need of reconciliation and unity in the Roman Christian communities that was the immediate goal of the letter. In Rom 5:1-11, Paul presents his theology of God's reconciling action with humanity through the sacrificial death of the Messiah. The purpose of this discourse for Paul is to demonstrate that God's reconciling love should be the foundation and model of reconciled and inclusive relationships within the Roman Christian communities. Through Christ's death, God abolished the enmity between God and human beings, thereby restoring peace and unity (the

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<sup>101</sup> David L. Turner, "Paul and the Ministry of Reconciliation in 2 Cor. 5:11-6:2" in *Criswell Theological Review* 4.1 (1989): 95.



vertical dimension). This study also shows that peace and reconciliation with God imply peace and reconciliation within human communities (the horizontal dimension), and that the latter is accomplished through the Spirit. Finally, this chapter expounds on the intrinsic relationship between justification and reconciliation in Paul's thoughts. It locates both terms within the framework of God's covenant faithfulness, which is demonstrated in the faithfulness of the Messiah. And it shows that for Paul, God's justification and reconciliation require human participation in this on-going divine mission.

## CHAPTER 3

### TREATMENT OF RELEVANT PASSAGES IN THE REST OF ROMANS

#### Introduction

In Rom 1:18-3:20, Paul shows that sin is a fundamental human problem which enslaves all peoples. All humanity Jews and Gentiles, “are under the power of sin” (3:9) and are incapable of liberating themselves from the captivity of sin. Human beings from Paul’s perspective are not able to fulfill the divine purpose. Gorman describes this divine purpose as “harmony and proper relations between humanity and God, within humanity itself, and between humanity and the rest of creation.”<sup>102</sup> However, as the second chapter has shown, in response to this human dilemma, God acted through the Messiah Jesus to disarm the powers of sin and death, and to effect reconciliation between God hostile humanity (5:1-11).

This study argues that underlying Paul’s reconciliatory narrative is a pastoral concern that God’s reconciling love in and through Messiah Jesus should be the foundation and model of reconciliatory and inclusive relationships among believers. This chapter intends to advance the validation of the above claim by expounding on the meaning and implications of God’s reconciliation for the Christian communities in Rome in the rest of the letter (Rom 5:12-16:27). In this chapter, I will pay particular attention to gender and racial reconciliation, and demonstrate that Paul’s narrative of God’s reconciliation in Romans is at the root of his basic assertions about unity, acceptance of cultural differences, and his gender inclusive mission. I shall argue with David Ackerman that “what guided Paul’s imperative for community reconciliation was a dynamic

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<sup>102</sup> Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 274.

understanding of the indicative of what Jesus Christ did through his sacrificial death on the cross.”<sup>103</sup> This is the basic assumption of the narrative analysis approach of the New Perspective on Paul which this study presupposes.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section argues that far beyond a transaction between an individual and God, the theological import of reconciliation from Paul’s perspective encompasses the establishment of a new social order, a new humanity “in Christ,” who are empowered through the divine Spirit to participate in God’s righteousness. The second section shows how Paul’s understanding of the inclusion of the Gentiles among the people of God and his insistence on the unity of Gentiles and Jews was shaped by his understanding of God’s covenant faithfulness. The third section argues that, for Paul, a major characteristic of God’s reconciled communities is the embodiment of God’s reconciliation in their everyday lives. In the last section, the study underscores that Paul’s theology of reconciliation envisions gender inclusive and participatory Christian communities.

### **3.1 Sanctification of Life as a Consequence of Reconciliation with God (Rom 5-8)**

Having shown how God reconciled rebellious humanity (Rom 5:1-11), Paul begins to explicate the meaning and implication of God’s reconciling act for the community of believers. Paul achieves this through three interconnected perspectives in 5:12-21; 6:1-7:6; and 7:7-8:39.

Paul’s teaching on God’s justification and reconciliation in 5:1-11 is followed by his use of the Adam-Christ typology (5:12-21).<sup>104</sup> Paul compares and contrasts Adam and Jesus Christ,

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<sup>103</sup> David A. Ackerman, “Atonement and Community Reconciliation in Paul’s Letters: The Shame of the Cross as the Means for Restoration,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 50.1 (2015): 83.

<sup>104</sup> Typology in biblical interpretation draws from the concept that one thing serves as a figure, model, or type for another thing. Paul uses typology here to draw a comparison between Adam and Jesus. But the statement

highlighting the effects that each had on the human condition and situation (5:12-21). Already in 1:18-3:20, Paul has described the sinful human condition prior to Christ in terms of ἀσέβεια (ungodliness) and ἀδικία (unrighteousness). In this passage (5:12-21), he traces the origin of sin to Adam, and through sin death came into the world (5:12). For Paul, the sin and death<sup>105</sup> entered the world through Adam, and exercised dominance over human beings. Stegman's explanation of this passage is insightful and helps us understand why Paul thinks Adam's sin affected all human beings:

While Paul regarded Adam as a historical figure, he also thinks of him as a foundational and representative figure, that is, as a progenitor of a "family" that bears his characteristics and walks in his ways. Adam's "disobedience" (v. 19) and "trespass" (v. 18) against the one commandment given to him (Gen 2:17; 3:1-7) unleashed *hamartia* ("sin"), which Paul personifies.... Adam's transgression let loose the powers of sin and death, thereby adversely affecting all creation; and ... all human beings have recapitulated his disobedience and, as a result, been further ensnared in their powers.<sup>106</sup>

Paul argues that all human beings were under the power of sin. However, this desperate human condition has been reversed through the Messiah, whose single act of righteousness and obedience brought justification and life for all (5:18-19). Through his death, humanity has been brought into the realm of God's grace (5:21). Thus they "no longer have to be conditioned by Adam, existing as fleshly creatures enslaved by Sin, alienated from God, and oriented to death. In Christ, humanity is oriented to life, justified by Christ's death, reconciled to God, and ruled by grace."<sup>107</sup>

This is the reason Paul tells the story of Adam and Jesus. Paul intends to show that the new life of believers must mirror the life of Christ, whose faithful obedience to God brought about

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"the free gift is not like the trespass (5:15) implies that Jesus is not a simple copy of Adam, while the phrase "much more surely," (5:15, 17) underscores that what the Messiah accomplished for humanity is far greater than the effects of Adam's sin. Jesus is antithetical type of Adam whose mission is to outdo and overcome the negative effects that Adam brought into the world.

<sup>105</sup> In Rom 5:12, 13, Paul sees sin and death as personified cosmic forces that entered the world and enslaved human beings.

<sup>106</sup> Stegman, "Romans."

<sup>107</sup> Maria Pascuzzi, *Paul: Windows on his Thought and World* (Winona: Anselm Academic, 2014), 126.

justification, reconciliation, grace, and life for humanity. Whereas the old humanity followed the disobedient pattern of Adam (cf. Gen 3), which culminates in alienation both from God and from one another, the new people of God will be marked by Christ's obedience and self-giving love (Phil 2:7–8). The lives of believers will no longer be controlled by the sinful passions of the flesh.

In Rom 6:1-7:6, Paul discusses how believers become united with Christ through baptism. One can infer from 5:12-21 that Adam and Jesus, from Paul's perspective, are representatives of all humanity. Adam represents the old humanity under sin, death, and condemnation, while Christ represents the new humanity who are faithful and obedient to God, a humanity whose orientation is self-giving love. For Paul, "the only escape from the Adam-determined existence that leads to death lies in participation in a new type of humanity determined by a new Adam, a new prototype of what it means to be human."<sup>108</sup> Justification/reconciliation therefore is far more than a liberation from sin; it also entails solidarity with Christ, "solidarity that universalizes the obedience of Christ for many."<sup>109</sup> Consequently, in 6:1-7:6, Paul discusses how believers are incorporated into Christ through baptism in order to live righteously and obediently to God. The general argument of this section is that those who have died to sin must no longer continue to live in it. They must present their bodies, that is, their embodied selves, to God as instruments of righteousness.

Paul begins this pericope by using an imaginary interlocutor to ask a rhetorical question. Inferring from the way grace increases in proportion to sin (5:20), the interlocutor asks, "Should we continue to sin in order that grace may abound?" (6:1). Paul says *μη γένοιτο* (an emphatic *no*). In order to address the interlocutor's question, Paul asks a second question: "How can we who died to sin go on living in it?" (6:2). This second question gives Paul the opportunity to discuss

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid, 125.

<sup>109</sup> Constantineau, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 131.

how believers die to sin by using the practice of baptism. Using soteriological indicative concepts, Paul describes the situation of believers. According to him, believers have “died to sin,” “we have been baptized into Christ,” “we have been baptized into his death,” and “we were buried with him by baptism into death.” The purpose of this dying and being buried with Christ is that believers “might walk in the newness of life” (ἵνα... καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν). The indicatives are followed by imperatives in 6:12-7:6. Paul exhorts believers not to allow sin to reign in their mortal bodies (6:12), nor to present their members as instruments of sin or unrighteousness. Rather, they should present themselves to God as instruments of righteousness (6:13). Baptism liberates one from the dominion of sin and death so that one might live with and for Christ.

I will point out a few significant points about Paul’s understanding of baptism and its implications for his theology of reconciliation and justification. From Paul’s perspective, baptism is a dynamic process through which one dies through participation in Christ’s death (cf. Mark 10:38–39). In Romans 6, Paul links together baptism, death, and resurrection from the dead. First, Paul says we are baptized “into Christ” (6:3). The preposition εἰς (into) implies an entrance into something. It is used in a baptismal context in Acts 8:16, 19:5; 1 Cor 10:2, and 1 Cor 12:13 to indicate “a means by which a shared identity of a people is created, an identity in reference to Moses, Christ, and/or the Church.”<sup>110</sup> Many scholars think that Paul’s specific use of the preposition in the phrase ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν is suggestive of a decisive personal relationship between a believer and Christ through baptism. Schreiner interprets it as the believer’s union with Christ,<sup>111</sup> while Stegman expands this interpretation to include the corporate reality of the church: “baptism not only brings about an intimate relationship of the baptized with Jesus...; it also brings one into a new sphere, the community of believers, ‘the body of Christ’ (1 Cor 12:13,

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<sup>110</sup> Hultgren, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 245.

<sup>111</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 307.

27).”<sup>112</sup> Baptism “into Christ” also means that believers are transferred from the domain of sin and death into the realm of Christ.<sup>113</sup> In baptism, the believer forms a bond with Christ and his body the church. This understanding of baptism is important for this study insofar as it implies that ethnic identity, social status, and gender are irrelevant factors for becoming a full member of this new family of God. Baptism is the source of effecting the unity of the new family of God (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:4-6).

Secondly, the phrases “buried with him” (6:4), “united with him in a death like his” (6:5), “crucified with him” (6:6), and having “died with Christ” (6:8) underscore how believers participate in the death of Christ through baptism. By the symbolic act of immersion into water, the person being baptized shares in the death of Christ. What this means in the spiritual life is the putting to death of the Adamic nature, the embodied self, controlled by sin, so “that the body of sin may be destroyed” (6:6b). The phrase “body of sin” (σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας) refers to “the whole man as controlled by sin,”<sup>114</sup> or the “sin-dominated self.”<sup>115</sup> It is understood as a believer’s life prior to baptism. It parallels “our old self” in the previous clause (6:6a). What this means is that by participating in Christ’s death through baptism, the Adamic self, that is, the sin-dominated self is destroyed so that believers are able to walk in “newness of life” (6:4). In Col 2:11, Paul speaks of baptism as a “spiritual circumcision” in which sins are “cut away.” Those who are baptized are no longer slaves to sin; rather, they are now slaves of righteousness and they present their “members” not to sin but to righteousness (6:15-23). To become “slaves of righteousness,” as

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<sup>112</sup> Stegman, “Romans.”

<sup>113</sup> Michael Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and his Letters* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2017), 432.

<sup>114</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 309.

<sup>115</sup> Matera, *Romans*, 151.

Stegman submits, “is to grow in the way of life exemplified by Jesus—the way of self-giving love and service in obedience to God,”<sup>116</sup>

Third, baptism is not just dying with Christ, it is being “buried with him” and “rising with him.” James M. Boice elucidates the reason why Paul associates burial with baptism in the following statement: “The reason burial is an important step even beyond death is that burial puts the deceased person out of this world permanently.... That is why Paul, who wanted to emphasize the finality of our being removed from the rule of sin and death to the rule of Christ emphasizes it.”<sup>117</sup> Therefore, “to be buried with Jesus indicates the finality of ‘dying to’ the dominion of sin.”<sup>118</sup> This burial through baptism into Christ’s death is not an end in itself. It has a purpose expressed in verse 4 with the proposition ἵνα (order), followed by a parallel: “just as Christ was raised.... we too might walk in newness of life” (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). What God did for Christ through the resurrection, God does for believers through baptism, namely, raising them to new life (cf. Gal 5:25). The present implication of being resurrected with Christ in baptism is that believers are now transformed and enabled by the divine Spirit to live a Christ-like life. Baptism not only liberates one from the dominion of sin and death, it also leads to a transformation of life (6:6, 8).

In this pericope, Paul expounds on the meaning and implication of the believer’s justification and reconciliation with God. Having being justified and reconciled with God, believers share in the death and risen life of Jesus. The import is that believers have new life—a life of total obedience to God expressed in self-giving love—and unity among all who participate in the death of Christ. The above exposition affirms the argument of this study that reconciliation from Paul’s perspective is relational (vertical and horizontal), participatory, and transformative.

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<sup>116</sup> Stegman, “Romans.”

<sup>117</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Romans* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 2:662.

<sup>118</sup> Sarah Heaner Lancaster, *Romans* (BTCB; Westminster: John Knox, 2015), 108.



In Rom 7:7-8:39, Paul presents the divine Spirit as God's power for peace, reconciliation, and sanctification. Paul contrasts the struggles of a person who strives by human power to fulfill the demands of the law with the graced life of the believer who has been empowered by the divine Spirit to live the law. The aim is to depict the existential life of the new people of God in the new age that the Messiah has inaugurated. For Paul, the life of a believer after baptism is a life lived in the Spirit rather than in the flesh (8:4-13). It is a life that is characterized by peace, righteousness, and union with God through the Spirit.

This section follows directly from Paul's argument in 7:1-6 that believers are no longer under the law because they have died with Christ. In order to develop his theology of the Christian life as a life empowered and guided by the Spirit, Paul first describes the experience of a sin-enslaved person (7:7-25). I will note a few important points in 7:7-25 that will enable us to understand Paul's emphasis about life in the Spirit in chapter 8. (1) Paul affirms that the Mosaic law is good and holy in itself (7:13). (2) However, the law was co-opted by the power of sin to enslave people (vv. 7-13). (3) The major predicament of the "I" of the pericope is the enslaving power of sin over humanity, the cosmic power that frustrates or inhibits the human aspiration to do good (vv. 14-25). The human person under the cosmic power of sin is caught up in the battle between wanting to obey God's law and being held captive to sin (7:22-23). The result is the desperate human cry for deliverance (7:24). Paul's response is "thanks be to God through Messiah Jesus our Lord!" (7:25), because "in Christ" God has provided a solution to the human predicament. Paul's position is that the Spirit of life empowers believers to fulfill the demands of the law, thereby ensuring justice and peace in the communities of believers.

In Rom 8:1-39, Paul continues the argument he developed in 5:1-21 about the formation of a new community of God's reconciled people. In this chapter, however, his emphasis is on the

empowering and transforming activities of the divine Spirit in the personal and communal life of the new people of God. Given Paul's argument from 1:18-7:25, I agree with Wu that the Spirit in chapter 8 is God's power to overcome the cosmic forces against God, as well as God's power to restore the disorderly cosmos to wholeness: "The Spirit's work is an integral part of God's reconciliation with humanity and his program of rescuing Adamic humanity from death to life."<sup>119</sup> I shall note three important themes in this chapter that are most relevant for this study.

First, in 8:1-4, Paul thinks that because the Messiah has done what the Law was unable to do—namely, deal with the problem of sin and reconcile humanity with God— therefore (a) there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ (8:1), because (b) fulfilling the just demands of the law is now possible through the power of the Spirit. Walking by the Spirit, believers share the result of Christ's victory and are able to do the just demands of the law.<sup>120</sup> This interpretation is supported by the verb περιπατέω ("to walk"), which denotes how the community members should conduct themselves (6:4, 13:13).<sup>121</sup> The point here is that reconciliation and justice are inseparable. The community of God's reconciled people will be marked by just practices.

Second, in 8:5-11, Paul contrasts life "according to the Spirit (πνεῦμα) and life according to the flesh (σάρξ)." He describes these two ways of living in terms of a fundamental mind-set. Life according to the Spirit is "life and peace" (ζωὴ καὶ εἰρήνη), while life according to the flesh is hostile to God (τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς ἔχθρα εἰς θεόν) and leads to death.<sup>122</sup> For Paul, hostility towards God and humans is a characteristic of life according to the flesh, while the Spirit animates

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<sup>119</sup> Siu Fung Wu, *Suffering in Romans*, (Eugene: Pickwick, 2015), 84.

<sup>120</sup> Ayodeji Adewuya "The Holy Spirit and Sanctification in Romans 8:1-17," in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* vol. 9 (2001) 77.

<sup>121</sup> This verb περιπατέω occur elsewhere (Rom 6:4; 13:13; 14:15; 1 Cor 3:3, 7:17; 2 Cor 4:2; 5:7; 10:3; 12:18; Gal 5:16; Phil 3:17, 18; and 1 Thess 2:12; 4:1, 12 in reference to the way of life expected of believers.

<sup>122</sup> Paul makes similar contrast between the Spirit and the flesh in Gal 3:3; 5:16-26; 6:8; Phil 3:3.

and creates the possibility for peace and reconciliation for believers. From the statements “you are in the Spirit” and “the Spirit resides in you” (plural), we can infer that Paul is suggesting a corporate dimension of peaceful co-existence since the Spirit is closely associated with the peace.

Third, the extensive use of family terminology such as “Abba”, husband, wife, labor and birthing, sons, children, brother, firstborn, heir, and inheritance is striking in chapter 8. It suggests that Paul has in mind the creation of a new human family of God in Christ in this discourse. Believers were explicitly referred to as “sons of God” (8:14) and as “children of God” (8:16-17). By the designation of the members of the new family of God (all who are led by the Spirit of God) as “sons” and “children” of God, James Dunn argues that Paul “has redefined the terms of God’s fatherhood to embrace a potentially much wider circle than Israel ‘according to the Flesh,’ the covenant promise extended to all the seed of Abraham.”<sup>123</sup> Both Jews and Gentiles can now be children of God who have full right to God’s common wealth through the Spirit. This is contrary to the Jewish motif that Israel alone was the Lord’s inheritance (Deut 32:9). In other words, Paul is saying that Israel’s special relationship with God is now being extended to include Gentiles who are in Christ. The term υἱοί (sons) also points to the unity between siblings that should exist within the Roman Christian communities, and to the unity they have with Christ, the Son of God (8:32).

The designation of members of God’s family as τέκνα θεοῦ (children of God) in 8:16, rather than sons of God<sup>124</sup> (8:14-15), indicates an inclusive language that should also mark the new family of God. The new family of God consists of male and female members whose identities and roles are not subsumed in the “other.” In fact, Jewett submits that “some have observed that this

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<sup>123</sup> James Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC, Vol. 38a; Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 459.

<sup>124</sup> The modern trend to translate of υἱοὶ θεοῦ (sons of God) in Rom 8:14; 9:26 as “children” within the context of Paul’s adoption and inheritance discourse does not reflect the socio-cultural realities of Paul’s day. Only the “male sons” in both the Jewish and Greco-Roman world were adopted with full legal right of inheritance. However, Sandra Polaski argues that the shift from υἱοὶ θεοῦ to τέκνα θεοῦ in verses 8:16-17 where Paul is discussing the activities of the Spirit, “may be read as a subtle but important reminder that the activity of the Spirit stretches both reality and metaphor.” Cf. Sandra H. Polaski, *A Feminist Introduction to Paul*, (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005), 89.

expression explicitly includes women as well as men which may correlate with Paul's commendation in chap. 16 of the remarkably large number of feminine church leaders."<sup>125</sup> Paul's emphasis is that our membership in God's family as children (male and female) is affirmed by the Spirit, and that we are heirs of God and coheirs with Christ. Paul's use of gender inclusive language is a powerful instance of rhetoric of reconciliation for the Roman communities.

### **3.2 Reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles: Racial Reconciliation (Rom 9-11)**

The manifestation of God's righteousness in relation to Jews and Gentiles in the light of the story of Christ is one of Paul's major concerns in Romans. God's righteousness is concretely demonstrated in God's just way of dealing with human sin, thereby enabling both Jews and Gentiles to have access to God on an equal basis. Paul's defense of God's plan of saving the Gentiles in Christ apart from the law (3:21-22), the Gentiles' reconciliation with God (5:1-11), their gracious adoption into the family of God, the outpouring of God's Spirit on them (Rom 6-8), and the apparent Jewish rejection of the gospel may have led to an inference that Israel has been displaced in God's salvific plan. This would imply that God has failed in his covenant faithfulness with Israel (9:6). Beker states the argument nicely as follows:

What is at stake is nothing less than the faithfulness of God. If it could be argued that God has rejected the people of the election, Israel, and that therefore God's promises to Israel have become null and void, how are the Gentiles to trust the confirmation of these promises to them through God's righteousness in Christ? Could it not be said in that case that there is arbitrariness on God's part (Rom 9:14) and that God is not to be trusted...?<sup>126</sup>

Faced with this dilemma, Paul has to defend God's covenant faithfulness to Israel as well as God's impartiality. Romans 9-11 contain Paul's extended presentation of God's longstanding plan to bring together all peoples (Jews and Gentiles) into the one family of Christ as a fulfilment of God's

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<sup>125</sup> Jewette, *Romans*, 500-501.

<sup>126</sup> J.C. Beker, "The faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *The Romans Debate* (ed. Karl P. Donfried; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 330. See also, Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative of God's Righteousness* (Louisville: Westminster, 2002), xxii-xxiii.

covenant with Abraham. Paul's vision of a "reconciled world" (11:15) and his images of the "first fruits" and the olive tree capture the central message of the section. I shall summarize Paul's defense of God's righteousness and show how Paul uses these images to explicate his central message of reconciliation and unity of Jew and Gentiles.

In his response to the question raised in 9:6 whether God's word has failed and in order to clarify the assertion that "not all Israelites truly belong to Israel" (9:6), Paul traces a narrative pattern of God's salvific activity which shows that divine election is always encompassed in the mystery of divine love and freedom for the purpose of human salvation. Beginning with the story of Esau and Jacob (Gen 16-17), Paul shows that the historic/covenantal people of God has never been defined solely by biological descent, but rather by God's sovereign and gracious election. He argues that the election of the Gentiles follows God's consistent but surprising ways of composing the covenant people, namely through divine freedom and mercy. He posits that the inclusion of the Gentiles among God's people does not mean exclusion of the Jews, rather it calls for a deeper understanding of God as the God of all nations (9:6-29). In this way, Paul shows that "God's impartiality cannot nullify God's covenant promises to Israel, neither can God's faithfulness be construed as loyalty that can be manipulated by humans."<sup>127</sup> Responding to the present situation of Israel's rejection of the gospel in 9:30-10:21, Paul holds that, at present, the gospel of a crucified Messiah is a stumbling block on the path of many Jews, thereby enabling the Gentiles to access the good news of Christ. He also contends that nonbelieving Jews are responsible for their failure to attain righteousness, because they pursue righteousness by works of the law and not by faithfulness of Christ.

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<sup>127</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, "God's Covenant Faithfulness to Israel," in *Reading Paul's Letter to the Romans* (ed. Jerry L. Sumney; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 159.

Central to Paul's defense of God's covenant faithfulness is this contention that God has not abandoned the covenant people. God has maintained a faithful remnant of Jews as proven by those who accept the gospel, thereby proving God's covenant faithfulness to Israel (Rom 11:1-10). The present rejection of most of Israel is not permanent (11:11-24). The expression ἡ ἀποβολὴ ἡούτων ("their rejection") can be understood in two ways: (1) their rejection by God (objective genitive)<sup>128</sup> or (2) their rejection of the gospel (subjective genitive).<sup>129</sup> The first view cannot be correct, since in 11:1-2 Paul argues that God has not rejected Israel. The second view seems to be supported by the overall argument of Romans 9-11, namely, that Israel's rejection of the gospel has made "the reconciliation of the world" possible (11:15). For Paul, Jews have not fallen permanently; their falling has led to the extension of salvation to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles' faith in turn is intended to provoke the Jews to repentance. Just as Jewish rejection of the gospel led to the reconciliation of the world, their acceptance of it will lead to the "resurrection from the dead," understood here as new life, a transformation from death to life.<sup>130</sup> This text echoes Col 1:19-20 in the sense that it presents a universal dimension to God's act of reconciliation.

To buttress his argument on the position of the Gentiles in relation to the Jews, Paul deploys two images: the first fruits of the dough and the olive tree (11:16-24). For lack of space, this study will not cover the intricacies of these images, but the central message intended by Paul will be explained. Paul begins his discussion of the olive tree with two conditional sentences: "if the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then the branches also are holy" (11:16). Paul is concerned here with the interrelationships of the parts

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<sup>128</sup> See ἀποβολή, as "the (temporary) rejection of Israelites by God," in "ἀποβολή," in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (eds. Frederick W. Danker et al.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 108.

<sup>129</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 612- 613; Jewett, *Romans*, 680-681.

<sup>130</sup> Hultgren, *Paul's letter to the Romans*, 408.

with the whole. Next, Paul uses the imagery of a cultivated olive tree, many of whose natural branches were broken off and in their place was engrafted wild olive branches to demonstrate how the Gentiles became part of God's people. The root of the olive tree is Christ<sup>131</sup> and the tree represents God's people, whose father is Abraham.<sup>132</sup> The broken branches refer to Israelites who have not accepted the gospel, while the engrafted wild branches are the Gentiles. With this imagery, Paul illustrates that God has not abandoned God's tree in preference to another tree. God only pruned the unfruitful branches and engrafts branches from another tree (Gentiles) into his olive tree — the historical people of God, the descendants of Abraham. So Paul warns the Gentile believers against any claim of superiority over unbelieving Jews. Paul is saying that "the Gentiles need to accommodate the Jews in the new Church, just as the Jews have been required to accommodate the engrafting of the Gentiles."<sup>133</sup> God can graft back the broken branches in the same way the wild branches were included. In the end, all Israel will be saved (11:26).

Another important point Paul intends to communicate here is the unity of the branches (Jews and Gentiles), their intrinsic oneness, and their interdependence in Christ,<sup>134</sup> a unity that was achieved by the costly blood of the Messiah. For Paul, both sets of branches are sustained and nurtured from the same source. Both share (συγκοινωνός) from the "rich root." The question here is how is the unity of the Jews and Gentiles believers to be achieved? Opinion varies among

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<sup>131</sup> There are many propositions to the understanding of the root in Paul's olive tree metaphor. See, Svetlana Khobnya "'The Root' in Paul's Olive Tree Metaphor (Romans 11:16-24)," *Tyndale Bulletin* (Jan. 1, 2013): 257-262. I agree with Stegman's view that the root at one level could be referring to Abraham, but at a deeper level, it refers to Christ who is the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham. See Stegman, "Romans," Although Paul did not explicitly mention Christ as the root, he does refer to Christ as the "the root of Jesse" (Rom 15:12).

<sup>132</sup> Mark Nanos does not see the olive tree as referring to Israel but to all who are in the family of God (Israelites and other nations). He argues that "Israel" functions as a metonym for "Christianity." Cf. Mark Nanos, "'Broken Branches': A Pauline Metaphor Gone Awry? (Romans 11:11-24)," accessed September 24, 2017 <http://www.marknanos.com/brokenbranches-8-1-08.pdf>

<sup>133</sup> Andrew D. Clarke, "Jew and Greek, Slave and Free, Male and Female: Paul's Theology of Ethnic, Social and Gender Inclusiveness in Romans 16," in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (ed. Peter Oakes; Grand Rapids, Backer Academic, 2002), 113.

<sup>134</sup> Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 894.

Pauline scholars on how Paul intends the unity between the Jews and Gentiles to be expressed. Does Paul think unity should be achieved through sameness or the obliteration of particular ethnic identity?

Brad Braxton's reading of Gal 3:28 has greatly demonstrated a deeper understanding of the Pauline concept of unity. His findings will be insightful in understanding Paul's vision of reconciliation and unity among Jews and Gentiles in Romans 9-11. Braxton argues that unity in Paul does not presuppose uniformity, nor is it the obliteration of different cultural identities. He submits, "When Paul says there is neither Jew nor Greek... he is not asserting the obliteration of difference, but rather the obliteration of dominance.... The dominance of one over the other based on difference, is the reality that is abolished!"<sup>135</sup> For Paul, Jews must remain Jews and Gentiles must remain Gentiles. In fact, Paul is against the Roman imperial politics that promotes the obliteration of racial identity under the guise of peace and unity. The fact that Gentiles are related to Abraham through Christ does not mean that they should lose their identity as Gentile or become hybrid Jews. Rather, Gentiles' and Jews' common faith in Christ ensures that they relate to one another in the midst of difference with mutuality and equality. In affirmation, William Campbell submits that "the fallacy in traditional understanding of Pauline universalism is that the transformative influence of the gospel is seen as relativizing particular identities to the point that they form one common new identity."<sup>136</sup> Campbell argues instead that "the relativization requires neither the obliteration of prior identities nor their complete coalescence into one identity."<sup>137</sup> This

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<sup>135</sup> Brad R. Braxton, *No longer Slaves: Galatians and the African American Experience* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2002), 94.

<sup>136</sup> William S. Campbell, *Unity and Diversity in Christ: Interpreting Paul in Context* (Collected Essays) (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 103.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 103.



argument is supported by the fact that Paul consistently identifies Gentiles as Gentiles, and Jews as Jews.

### **3.3 Embodying Reconciliation Within and Outside the Communities (Rom 12-15)**

In Romans 12-15, Paul lays out how his theology of reconciliation in Rom 5:1-11 is concretely worked out on the horizontal level. This comes after his doctrinal exposition as a way of showing the connection between the gospel and lived praxis. As in Romans 5-8 and 9-11, Paul's argument chapters 12-15 is that the love of God demonstrated in Christ's death is both the basis of believers' reconciliation and the criterion of conduct for those who are "one body in Christ" (12:5). In these chapters, Paul develops more fully the nature of the transformed life in the Spirit. The parenesis found here makes clear that Paul intends the theological argument in chapters 1-11 to stimulate a response, a commitment that will transform the life of communities of faith. The ethical instructions are illustrative of what these responses should be, given the redemptive character of God's righteous relationship that has been revealed to them through the gospel of God's reconciliation in Christ.

In Rom 12:1-2, Paul appeals to believers,<sup>138</sup> based on what God has done through the Messiah, to respond to the divine call by offering their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. Believers are not to be conformed to this world, rather they are to be transformed through the renewing of their minds so that they will be able to discern what is the will of God. This appeal to offer their embodied selves as a living sacrifice calls to mind Rom 6:13, 19, where Paul gives a similar exhortation to present one's members as instruments of righteousness. According to

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<sup>138</sup> Note that in these exhortations, Paul addresses all the members of the communities, using the plural "you." He is not addressing individuals but the whole communities (Jews and Gentiles). As we noted in Rom 8, the use of ἀδελφοί (brothers and sisters) reminds the communities of their familial connection through the Messiah and the obligations towards one another which this familial tie presupposes. These obligations include self-giving service, love, peace, and unity.

Constantineanu, a living sacrifice is “a daily life of sacrificial obedience to the will of God, modelled on the template of Christ’s self-giving love for others.”<sup>139</sup> The emphasis is that human bodies should be places where the righteousness of God is worked out. The appeal to be transformed through the renewal of the mind means an ongoing process of sanctification (divinization), which Paul attributes to the divine Spirit in 2 Cor 3:18. Believers are to discern God’s will; that is, through rational reasoning aided by the Spirit, they are to identify what God expects from them in their particular circumstances.

In the subsequent verses (12:3-21), one sees that Paul’s appeal for a transformed way of living and the renewal of thought calls for right judgment concerning one’s place within the body of Christ.<sup>140</sup> Transformation of Christian minds (Rom 12:1-2) results in new communal life marked by generous service to one another according to the particular charism received (12:3-8). He reminds the believers that together, in their diversity and diverse charisms, they make up the one body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:27). The unity of the communities is realized only when members exercise their unique gifts with humility and zeal. Paul warns against thinking too highly of oneself or despising the gifts of others within the community (12:3-8). Such attitudes breed hostility.

Beginning in 12:9, Paul specifies concretely how communities are to model God’s gracious reconciliation in their horizontal relationships, both within and outside their communities. This comes in the form of a series of exhortations to love and mutual respect (12:9-10). For Paul, relationships within and outside the community should be guided by genuine love, even love for one’s enemy (12:20). He admonishes the believers to be at peace with all (12:18), to agree with one another (12:16a), to be patient in affliction (12:12b), and constant in prayer (12:12). Paul

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<sup>139</sup> Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 157.

<sup>140</sup> Hultgren, *Paul’s letter to the Romans*, 445.

encourages the believers not to repay one evil for evil, but to overcome evil with good (12:17, 21). For Paul, believers are to repay evil with good in order to avoid escalating hostility. As Haddon Willmer has shown, much of these parenthesis in this section can be seen as reconciliatory. Paul is attending to points where harmonious relations of Christians together and with their non-Christian neighbors are not easily secured<sup>141</sup>

Some scholars have noted the inherent tension of Rom 13:1-7, a passage which supports compliance with imperial authority and non-resistance to governing authority, with regard to Paul's anti-imperial impetus. For lack of space, I shall not do a detailed analysis of this passage. But it is important to point out that, for Paul, the principle of love that guides Christian communities applies to Christians' relationships with outsiders, even civil authorities. Secondly, loyalty to Jesus does not mean anarchy in so far as civil authorities remain subject to God. In 13:8, Paul maintains that the only obligation that believers have is to love one another. Note that in 8:12 believers are obligated to live by the Spirit and not to gratify the human concupiscence. Living in the Spirit and loving one another seem to be the obligations Paul is imposing on the communities.

In chapters 14-15, Paul addresses specific issues of dispute within the house churches in Rome. The dispute is between two groups, "the weak" and "the strong," who differ over issues of food and holy days. The identity of these groups has been a matter of contention among scholars. I agree with Hultgren's view that "the 'weak' consisted of a core of Jewish Christians who preserved traditions regarding cultic and dietary matters, and perhaps some Gentiles who adopted them, and the 'strong' were the Gentile Christians and others of Jewish heritage... who do not."<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Haddon Willmer, "'Vertical' and 'Horizontal' in Paul's Theology of Reconciliation in the Letter to the Romans," *Transformation* 24.3/4 (Jul. & Oct. 2007): 155.

<sup>142</sup> Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 496.

The real problem here is the differing understandings between these groups with regard to what faithfulness to God means in their everyday lives.<sup>143</sup> Note that the terms “weak” and “strong” likely originated with the strong group. They are “strong” not only in faith, but also because “they have the power to name and to exclude. They use a term of honor for themselves and a term of shame for the others,<sup>144</sup> and in this way, they introduce into the Christian communities the disparity inherent in the first century Mediterranean culture of honor and shame, thereby “altering the internal dynamic of the communities in ways incompatible with the gospel.”<sup>145</sup>

Paul’s concern is to unify these fractured communities. He does so not by imposing uniformity but by accepting differences. Paul’s response comes in the form of a series of exhortations: he pleads for the welcoming of all, especially the weak (14:1; 15:7), just as Christ has welcomed them. This is the basis of believers’ practices of mutual acceptance. Believers are to welcome one another, including their cultural differences. Paul admonishes the strong to be careful in their dealings with those whose faith is weak, and the weak not to judge those who are doing what God allows (14:1-4). Each member should be true to his or her conscience and do their duty as service rendered to the Lord (14:5-9). Paul warns the believers against condemning or despising one another, for Jesus will be the judge (14:10-12), and against putting a stumbling block in a brother’s or sister’s way (14:13). Rather than engage in the politics of division, Paul asks the community to pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding (14:13-23). The kingdom of God according to Paul is righteousness, as well as peace and joy. Stegman notes that “peace and joy are not commodities that can be bought or things that can be found. Rather, they ‘find’ us when

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<sup>143</sup> Lancaster, *Romans*, 230; Stegman, “Romans” (2018).

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 230-231.

<sup>145</sup> Constantineanu, *Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 173.

we are growing into the people God calls us to be.”<sup>146</sup> Living peacefully and joyfully is distinctive of reconciled communities of God.

These admonitions towards peace, unity, and reconciliation continue in chapter 15. However, in 15:5-6, Paul couches his admonitions with prayer for harmony in life (15:5) and in liturgy (15:6) among the believers. This passage is important for two reasons: (a) it highlights the need to accompany the ministry of unity and reconciliation with prayer. While we strive for peace and unity, we recognize that, ultimately, these are divine gifts. In his analysis of Paul’s prayer, Thomas Schreiner builds on the perspectives of Cranfield and Moo, and submits that Paul’s prayer for unity here is not a prayer for unanimity on the issues that divide the “weak” and the “strong.” According to him, Paul is not praying that unity be achieved via the “weak” surrendering their unsatisfactory theology. Rather, Paul prays that they will be unified by learning to love and accept one another in the midst of their differences.<sup>147</sup>

(b) The prayer Paul calls for shows that unity within the Roman Christian communities should be modeled on the life of the Messiah, that is, on the self-giving love that marked his earthly ministry. For Paul, when believers are united, they will be able to worship God together in harmony as one body. God is not honored when believers are fractured by divisions. As Schreiner strongly argues, “God is honored when Jews and Gentiles, with all their diversity, stand shoulder to shoulder and lift their voices in praise of God.”<sup>148</sup> Giving glory to God is the ultimate divine purpose for the creation of this new people of God, the glory that sinful humanity denies God (1:21). Note also that Paul’s reference to his appeal for the financial support of the church in

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<sup>146</sup> Thomas D. Stegman, *Written for Our Instruction: Theological and Spiritual Riches in Romans* (New York: Paulist, 2017), 60.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 750.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 750.

Jerusalem (15:22-29) reflects a praxis of reconciliation between the new people of God.<sup>149</sup> In chapters 14-15, unity and reconciliation within the Roman churches are the focal points of Paul's parenesis and the culmination of his gospel. This is because Paul understands God's reconciling work in Christ as the inauguration of a new age, the age in which God's Spirit moves among the nations to bring salvation and reconciliation. Therefore, to belong to this new age, the new creation era, is to live and embrace the message and ministry of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor 5:14-21).

### **3.4 Reconciliation and Gender Inclusiveness in the Roman Communities (Rom 16)**

In Romans 16, Paul brings into praxis his theological vision of an inclusive community of God's people that runs throughout the entire letter. As I have argued in this study, the purpose of God's reconciling work through the Messiah is the creation of the new covenant people of God that includes both Jews and Gentiles. An essential characteristic of this new community from Paul's perspective is its boundary-crossing unity in Christ. Paul has powerfully communicated this point through his theology (chs. 1-11) and his ethical instructions (chs. 12-15). Now, in the last chapter, he demonstrates it through his references to specific members of the Roman house churches. The people Paul greets seem to be prominent members of the communities who have played vital roles in preaching the good news and in partnering with Paul in his ministry.

Here, Paul recognizes and appreciates the spiritual labors of men and women of different racial and social backgrounds. Andrew Clarke's onomastic study of Romans 16 shows that the people Paul acknowledges include names from different ethnic groups (Jews and Gentiles), from different social backgrounds (slaves, freed, and free persons), as well as names of both male and female members of the communities.<sup>150</sup> Consequently, Clarke concludes that Paul's theology of

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<sup>149</sup> Thomas Stegman, "What Does the New Testament Say About Reconciliation?" in *Healing God's People: Theological and Pastoral Approaches, A Reconciliation Reader* (ed. Thomas A. Kane; New York: Paulist, 2013), 43.

<sup>150</sup> Clarke, "Jew and Greek, Slave and Free, Male and Female," 103-125.

inclusiveness is aptly demonstrated in these greetings. The names are presented in such a way as to transcend all ethnic, social, and gender barriers.<sup>151</sup> Susan Mathew agrees with Clarke's view. She affirms that, given the argument of the entire letter, the greetings in Rom 16:1-16 supports the letter's overall purpose of creating unity and love among the Roman Christians.<sup>152</sup>

What is significant in chapter 16 is that, contrary to some passages in which Paul or his disciple seems to subordinate women in both church and family spheres (1Cor 11:3-16; 1Cor 14:34-35; Col 3:18-19; Eph 5:22-33; 1Tim 2:8-15; Titus 2:4-5), here in chapter 16, he recognizes the ministerial, evangelical, and leadership roles of women. Eight out of the twenty-six people mentioned are women. Clarke notes that "while the majority are men, it is clear that the women are more often commended for their Christian activity."<sup>153</sup> These activities include: (a) hard work in the apostolic ministry (16:6, 12), (b) being co-head of a house church, (16:3) (c) being a deacon and patron (16:1-2), and (d) being an apostle (16:7). In the light of this passage, Elizabeth Fiorenza has suggested that the history of early Christianity includes the egalitarian leadership of women.<sup>154</sup> According to her, "women and men in the Christian community are not defined by their sexual procreative capacities or religious, cultural or social roles, but by their discipleship and the empowering with the Spirit."<sup>155</sup> Paul's identification of each one by name without subordinating gender and his appraisal of women's ministry give us a picture of an egalitarian and unified community that Christ forms in union with the Spirit.

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid, 123.

<sup>152</sup> Susan Mathew, *Women in the Greetings of Romans 16.1-16: A Study of Mutuality and Women's Ministry in the Letter to the Romans* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 2.

<sup>153</sup> Clarke, *Rome in the Bible*, 119.

<sup>154</sup> Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM, 1995), 140.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 212.

## **Conclusion**

As this study has shown, Paul's theology of reconciliation is not just about vertical reconciliation; rather, it also has much to do with horizontal relationships. It is a theology of unity, inclusion, transformation, and full participation of all members of God's people in the body of Christ. The purpose of God's reconciling act through the Messiah is the creation of the reconciled people of God, a people that will be marked by faithfulness, holiness, love, peace, respect, and hospitality. For this new community, the old ways of hostility, exclusion, and discrimination have passed away and the new things have come to be. Empowered by the divine Spirit, this new people no longer think or act from the old age perspective of gender, class, and race; rather, they have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor 5:14-6:2). Paul's theology of reconciliation can help us in reconstructing his fundamental understanding of the relationship between people (race), man and woman (gender), and the roles each person is to play in realizing the kingdom of God.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE IGBO CONTEXT**

#### **Introduction**

What we have gleaned so far from Paul's theology of reconciliation is that through the Christ-event, God has abolished the hostility between God and humans, the hostility among human beings themselves, and the hostility between humans and nature, thereby inaugurating a new order in human history. Paul's intent is to show that the community of God's reconciled people must embody God's reconciling love in their everyday lives at individual and communal levels. Radical Christian reconciliation that is inclusive of love, peace, justice, unity and harmony is a central message that Paul articulates in Rom 5:1-11 and beyond.

Paul seeks to articulate and explicate the broader meaning of reconciliation for the first century Christians in Rome, thereby giving us an example of concrete theologizing. It remains the responsibility of present day Pauline scholars to articulate and elucidate the meaning of this vision of reconciliation in concrete specific contexts. This task is a pressing one, given the increased awareness and expectation that biblical theology and hermeneutics should reflect and address the very real existential situations of our time. In this way, biblical theology and interpretation cease to be abstract intellectual speculation and assume a liberative function. It is this conviction that informs my desire to explore the meaning and implications of Paul's theology of reconciliation for the Igbo Christian communities in Nigeria.

The concrete situation that a substantial number of Igbos today find themselves in is one of systemic class and clan discrimination (the Osu caste system) and gender discrimination. The twin problems of Osu caste practice and gender inequality have become the causes for conflicts,

alienation, and broken relationships among the Igbos both in the Church and in the communal villages. Marginalized women and the Osu (a person dedicated to gods) are segregated, victimized, and oppressed on the basis of traditions that exclude them from the Diala (free-born/the son of the soil). The Osu caste system has perennially kept the Diala and the Osu at enmity. This phenomenon raises questions about how Christians in Igboland have understood and appropriated the Christian gospel of the reconciling love of God.

In this chapter, my intention is to explore the relevance of a Pauline theology of reconciliation and Christian love for the Igbo Christian communities that have been beleaguered by tensions arising from pervasive and dehumanizing cultural practices. Although the problems faced by Igbo communities are not identical with those of the Roman Christian communities, one discovers similarities as one reads Romans through the lens of Igbo experience. I believe that Paul offers theological insight in Romans that is both relevant and helpful for contemporary discussion of racial, class and gender reconciliation among ndi Igbo. My objective is to provide a theological framework grounded in Scripture and Pauline materials that can serve to foster the complementary co-existence of all classes of people and both genders in Igbo society.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section presents a brief overview of the contemporary Igbo context in light of its past. It includes discussion of the Igbo worldviews that have shaped the social relationships among ndi Igbo. The second section identifies discriminatory gender and clan practices that have sources of division and conflict in Igbo communities and remain so. The third section addresses the challenges that both the Osu caste system and Igbo gender discrimination pose in the light of Paul's ethics of reconciliation. The last section considers the implications of Paul's theology of reconciliation for Igbo Christian communities.

#### 4.1 A Brief Overview of the Igbo Context

The Igbo-speaking people located in the Southeastern part of Nigeria are one of three major tribes in Nigeria, West Africa. Ndi Igbo are found in the five states that make up the Southeastern political zone of Nigeria. These states include: Anambra, Imo, Abia, Ebonyi, and Enugu States. Some Igbo are also found in Delta, Bayelsa, and River States. Igbo is the name of the ethnic group as well as the name of the language of the people.

The Origin of the Igbo ethnic group is still a subject of debate among Igbo historians. Rose Uchem submits that “the affinity between Igbo customs and Judaic Levitical codes have led some Igbo scholars and others to speculate about ndi Igbo being related to the Hebrews.”<sup>156</sup> Some instances of this affinity, according to G.T. Basden, are sacrifice and circumcision. He also submits that the language bears several interesting parallels with Hebrew idioms.<sup>157</sup> Some Igbo scholars such as Godfrey Chukwuemeka and Polycarp Onwura have argued that ndi Igbo are one of the lost tribes of Israel. Onwura states categorically that ndi Igbo are “the biblical lost tribe of Israel who after contact with ancient Egypt were pushed down southward as a result of Arab invasion of the North Africa.”<sup>158</sup> It has been suggested that the name Igbo developed from Heebo, which was an adulteration of the word Hebrew.<sup>159</sup> It is imperative to note that the claim to Igbo Jewish origin is still inconclusive and that the government of Israel has not recognized Igbo as one of the lost tribes of Israel. There are also some who argue that ndi Igbo are indigenous to their present

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<sup>156</sup> Rose N. Uchem, *Overcoming Women's Subordination: An Igbo African and Christian Perspective: Envisioning an Inclusive Theology with Reference to Women* (Enugu: Snaap Press, 2001), 36.

<sup>157</sup> G.T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1966), 31.

<sup>158</sup> Polycarp Emeka C. Onwurah, *Marriage: Christian and Traditional: A Social and Theological Study of the Interaction of ethical Values in the Igbo Society of Nigeria* (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University Teachers College, 1982), 23 Quoted in Uchem, *Overcoming Women's Subordination*, 36.

<sup>159</sup> Uche P. Ikeanyibe, *The Quest for the Origin of the Igbo People* (Benin City: Peculiar Heritage Publications) 1999, 11.

habitation in the country and have no history of having migrated from another place.<sup>160</sup> According to the Nigerian 2006 census, Igboland was estimated to have a population in excess of 30 million.<sup>161</sup> Ndi Igbo are very religious people. Before the advent of the missionaries, the people practiced traditional religion, but today over 90% of the Igbo population identify as Christian.

Ndi Igbo are enterprising and adventurous people with fluid political organization. Igbo political life in the precolonial era has best been expressed in the concept of “Igbo enwe eze” (Igbo do not have king). This implies that ndi Igbo do not have a centralized form of administration. According to Basden, “every town, and, incidentally every family or household, stands by itself.”<sup>162</sup> Igbo communities, no matter how small in population or landmass, were autonomous before the British imperial policy and the amalgamation by Nigeria in 1914. The pre-colonial socio-political structure of Igbo society was said to be democratic and egalitarian. J.B.C. Okorie notes, “the main credo of Igbo culture is the emphasis placed on individual achievement and initiatives, prestige and egalitarian leadership. All participate in community affairs, in decision-making, and development efforts.”<sup>163</sup> Power and authority in Igbo villages or clans were divided between both sexes (dual-sex political system). Each sex generally managed its own affairs and had its own kinship institutions, age grades, and secret and title societies. While it is true that ndi Igbo did not have a centralized administrative government, they had certain characteristics that distinguished them from other people. These characteristics included

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<sup>160</sup> Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976), 3.

<sup>161</sup> Adeline A. Idike and Okechukwu I. Eme, “Census Politics in Nigeria: An Examination of 2006 Population Census,” *Journal of Policy and Development Studies* 9.3 (2015), 58, accessed on January 15, 2018 [https://www.arabianjbm.com/pdfs/JPDS\\_VOL\\_9\\_3/4.pdf](https://www.arabianjbm.com/pdfs/JPDS_VOL_9_3/4.pdf)

<sup>162</sup> Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*, 32.

<sup>163</sup> J.B.C. Okorie, *Oji Igbo: The Igbo Kolanut. Uzo esi asu n' agozi oji n'ala Igbo. Presenting and blessing of Kolanut in Igboland* (Milipitas: St. Elizabeth Church, 1995), 6, quoted in Rose Uchem, “Liberative Inculturation: The Case of Igbo Women,” *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology* 14 (2002), 87.

“geographical contiguity, a single language comprising related dialects, a significant measure of cultural homogeneity, including an egalitarian social structure, a distinct marriage system, comparable family life and traditional forms of religion.”<sup>164</sup>

#### **4.1.2 Two Important Igbo Worldviews that Shape Social Relations**

A worldview primarily seeks to answer fundamental questions about a place and the relationship of humans within the universe. A people’s understanding of their existence, their vision and attitude towards life, and even their approaches to problems are all influenced by their worldview. A worldview provides people with a system of values, attitude, and beliefs. It becomes a perspective that seems key to understanding the social, political, religious, and psychological problems of a social group.

The Igbo worldview is deeply religious. Beliefs and practices permeate the central aspects of Igbo life. The day-to-day activities of an Igbo man or woman get often interwoven with beliefs and practices. Therefore, to understand this people, one must understand the place that traditional religion plays in Igbo society, from the primordial times to present day.

Historically speaking, for ndi Igbo, the world consists of two complementary worlds—the physical and the spiritual, and both worlds interpenetrate. The spiritual world is inhabited by Chukwu (the Supreme Being/God) and other non-human beings such as deities, spirits, ancestors and other nature forces, some of which are considered malevolent to humans. Ndi Igbo relate more directly to these supersensible beings than to God. There is a belief that these divine personages and forces exercise powerful influence over the lives of the people, and that persons need to maintain good a relationship with divine beings in order to stay happy and prosperous. There is an

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<sup>164</sup> Joseph Therese Agbasiere, *Women in Igbo Life and Thought* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2-3.

operative conviction that human beings can manipulate and control these non-human beings through sacrifices and divination for human interest. Rituals such as libations and sacrifices therefore are offered to deities/ancestors. Sacrifices in traditional Igbo religion can either be for the purpose of manipulating or warding off evil spirits, or for expiatory, petitionary, or thanksgiving purposes. The object of a sacrifice might be kolanuts, chickens, goats, and even humans. A human being who is offered as object of appeasement to a deity is called an *Osu*.

Historically speaking traditional Igbo culture also carries a gendered worldview. Everything in Igbo cosmology is gendered either as male or female. Some scholars have posited that in the Igbo creation narrative, the Igbo creator is a twin-deity called Chineke. In Chukwuma Azuonye's view, "Chi na Eke, comprises a male principle, Chi (divine power of life) and a female principle, Eke (divine power of creation)."<sup>165</sup> Azuonye further explains:

although the name of this deity has now been expropriated by Christianity and re-interpreted as Chi na-eke (the Chi that creates), its original meaning has survived in traditional rites and invocations in which its duality is eloquently proclaimed and sometimes expatiated upon. The male aspect, Chi, is associated with cosmic light represented by the light of the sun (Anyaanwu) which is commonly worshipped separately as a male-deity, Anyaanwu. The female aspect, Agbala, is... associated with the earth's fertility.<sup>166</sup>

Chinwe Nwoye supports this above view and adds that the Sky (Supreme Being) and the Ancestral deities are male, while the deities of the Earth and Water are female. The belief among ndi Igbo is that the two principles are needed and in the right balance in their contributions to the welfare of humans.<sup>167</sup> The Igbo world is believed to be at its best when there is a power balance between the

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<sup>165</sup> Chukwuma Azuonye, "Power, Marginality and Womanbeing In Igbo Oral Narratives," in *Power and Powerlessness of Women in West African Orality* (ed. Raoul Granqvist & Nnadozie Inyama; Umeå: Umeå University, 1992), 9.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>167</sup> Chinwe M. A. Nwoye, "Igbo Cultural and Religious Worldview: An Insider's Perspective," *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 3.9 (2011), 309, accessed on January 2, 2018, [http://www.academicjournals.org/article/article1379514201\\_Nwoye.pdf](http://www.academicjournals.org/article/article1379514201_Nwoye.pdf)

male and female deities. Gender power imbalance in the two realms may result in an unpleasant situation. This principle applies also when it comes to the relationships between men and women in family and in the socio-political life of pre-colonial Igbo.

The egalitarian and dual-sex political structure of the pre-colonial Igbo society has not continued in contemporary Igbo life. It has eroded. Many Igbo scholars blame the Christian missionaries for this tragedy. Some scholars are of the opinion that, through the Christian Churches and the British based educational system, the colonial policy of marginalizing women was implemented in Igboland by the British colonizers. Uchem submits that “the missionaries effectively and uncritically implemented the colonial policies, which politically, economically and socially marginalized women. Consequently, women were deposed from their economic, political and social positions, which they had enjoyed in the pre-colonial, pre-Christian and pre-Islamic days.”<sup>168</sup> This is to say that the subordination of women in Igbo communities is not intrinsic to primeval Igbo culture, but rather is the outcome of western notions of women’s inferiority brought into Nigeria by the British colonizers and missionaries. Taking a more controversial position, I wish to argue that discrimination against women has its root in pagan Igbo socio-cultural and religious practices, which then intensified and became normative as a result of Western contact.

#### **4.2 Discriminatory Gender and Class Practices among Ndi Igbo as Sources of Conflicts**

There is no universally accepted definition of discrimination. For the purpose of this study, I will adopt a definition of discrimination proposed by Wouter Vandenhoe. Vandenhoe defines discrimination as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on a number of grounds which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or

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<sup>168</sup> Uchem, *Overcoming Women’s Subordination*, 46-47.

exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”<sup>169</sup> Discrimination is a global phenomenon and is evident in many cultures and systems of the world. It is the effect of established practices that confer or deny privilege to certain people based on race, class, gender, religion, etc. In this section, I examine two strong Igbo discriminatory cultural practices (the Osu caste system and female gender discrimination) to which Paul’s theology of reconciliation must be able to speak. These are practices that have caused deep social rifts among Igbo communities.

The Igbo people are an ethnic group that is more than 90% Christian. One might expect that the Christian message of love and reconciliation exerts some influence on the historic discrimination, division, hatred, clannish superiority found in Igbo life. But the contrary seems to be the case. There is need today to address these oppressive cultural practices with the best of theological and biblical resources so that genuine reconciliation can begin to take place, a reconciliation that has the potential to bring about the restoration of broken relationships, the redressing of imbalances and justice.

*4.2.1 The Discriminatory Osu Caste System in Igbo Culture:* The Osu caste system is an ideology of class domination in Igboland based on a belief that a certain group of people is to be ostracized and excluded from association with the Diala, either because they are themselves victims of ritual offering/consecration to a deity or they are the descendant of those victims. Igbo scholars generally locate the origin of the Osu caste system within the context of bloodless human sacrifice to deities in Igbo traditional religion. The belief that the deities could be manipulated in order to protect the people and the fact that the deities could be placated to avert the havoc they

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<sup>169</sup> Wouter Vandenhoe, *Non-discrimination and Equality in the View of the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies* (Oxford: Intersentia, 2003), 33.



could wreak on the community are at the root of the Osu caste system in Igboland. Below are three important descriptions of Osu which underscore the sources of the practice.

According to C.O. Durueke, the Osu caste system originates from a person used in sacrifice to placate a god for an abomination of a people in order to avert the god's anger. Such a person is said to have been used for ritual purification of the land but left alive to assist the cultic priest in his work. Later a wife was secured for him and a piece of land given to him to live on.<sup>170</sup> J.C. Agunwamba explains that "the Osu were miserable outcasts whose forefathers were bought and dedicated to the services of the gods; despised people who lived in special isolated quarters around the market; unclean persons who were treated like people with infectious diseases. Most of them were very beautiful and wealthy; yet, they were degraded human beings not fit to be associated with by any respectable man or woman in the society."<sup>171</sup> In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe describes an Osu in the following way:

He was a person dedicated to a god, a thing set apart— a taboo forever, and his children after him. He could neither marry nor be married by the freeborn. He was in fact an outcast, living in a special area of his village, close to the Great Shrine. Whenever he went he carried with him the mark of his forbidden caste— long, tangled and dirty hair. A razor was taboo to him. An Osu could not attend the assembly of the free-born, and they, in turn could not shelter under his roof. He could not take any of the four titles of the clan, and when he died he was buried by his kind in the Evil forest.<sup>172</sup>

These descriptions provide us with important facts about the Osu especially as they were perceived before the advent of the missionaries: (a) an Osu is someone who was bought (slave) and dedicated to the gods by the entire community in order to appease the gods; (b) the state of Osu is transferred by birth or marriage and their role is to render services to the community's deities; (c) he and his

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<sup>170</sup> C.O. Durueke "Persistence of Osu Caste System in Igboland," *Sunday Times* (Jan. 13, 1985), 5, Quoted in Jerome N. Okafor, *The Challenge of Osu Caste System to the Igbo Christians* (Onitsha: Veritas Printing & Publishing, 1993), 21.

<sup>171</sup> J.C. Agunwamba, *I Married an Osu* (Enugu: Joen Publisher, 1997), 27.

<sup>172</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1984), 111.

generation are perpetually ostracized and usually live near the village market/shrine in order to be proximate to the deities; (d) an Osu is considered a taboo among ndi Igbo; (e) the Osu can be identified by marks or cuts on their body. Osu are expected to appear shabby in order to depict this *Osuness*, and they are associated with disgusting body odor; (f) an Osu and his entire family are discriminated against and dehumanized.

Some of these elements, such as serving the village deities and appearing haggard, have waned with time. In fact, Achebe recounts how Mr. Kiaga, the missionary priest in Mbanta village, ordered the first two Osu converts to shave off their long, tangled hair, thereby breaking the superstitious fear that they would die if they do so. However, other elements mentioned above remain intact today. The present reality of ndi Osu (Osu people) in the contemporary Igboland is captured by Ezeala as follows: “the Osus were socially avoided, discounted, isolated, denigrated, victimized, abused, dehumanized and denied fundamental human rights. In some schools, the children of Osus are cajoled, mocked, spat upon, ridiculed by pupils and their leaders while in villages; they suffer all sorts of opprobrium and odium.”<sup>173</sup>

Today, it remains an abomination for an Osu to marry a Diala (freeborn). Diala Christian families will go to any extent to prevent their sons and daughters from marrying an Osu. Investigations are carried out by Diala families to ascertain the social identities of their in-laws before marriage plans are solidified. Achebe used the character of Okonkwo to depict this reality in *No Longer at Ease*. When Okonkwo found out that his son wants to marry Clara, who was an Osu, Okonkwo decried:

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<sup>173</sup> Ezeala, J. O. I. “A Lecture on the discrimination in Nigeria Society: A step on the United Nations Effects,” *African Concord* 7th January, 1988, 6.

Osu is like a leprosy in the minds of my people. I beg of you my son not to bring the mark of shame and leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children's children unto the third and fourth generations will curse you and your memory. It is not for myself I speak, my days are few. You will bring sorrow on your head and on the heads of your children. Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters will your sons marry? Think of that my son. We are Christians but we cannot marry our own daughters.<sup>174</sup>

In fact, the non-contraction of marriage between Diala and Osu has remained unchangeable despite the enormous efforts of Christianity and western education to repeal the practice. Beyond marriage, ndi Osu are socially, economically politically, and religiously discriminated against. They are socially segregated. Ndi Osu are limited to socialize only among themselves. Most contemporary Osu are landless owing to their growing population. They can neither buy land nor purchase house from the diala. This constitutes a serious challenge for their wellbeing.

In some places, it is prohibited for Osu to form associations or hold meetings with Diala. I remember being warned by my mother as a little girl not to accept food or drink from Osu kids in the school because, according to her, Diala and Osu do not share food and drink. We were warned not to seek safety or shelter especially when it is raining at the homes of ndi Osu or else we ourselves could become Osu. These social discriminatory practices were inculcated in children even before they understand the meaning of these realities. I still remember many fights between Diala and Osu children in my primary school. A fight could erupt because a Diala has insulted an Osu by referring to him/her as Osu. Such school fights could go on for days until one party became tired and surrendered. The Igbo cultural system implants hatred and division in the minds of innocent children who then grow up with this mentality.

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<sup>174</sup> Chinua Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1966), 121.

Politically, ndi Osu are discriminated against. Igbo communities are governed by titled people. Titled men such as Ndi Nze na Ozo are the ones who make policies and judge legal cases in the community. Ndi Nze na Ozo are usually identified by their red caps at social, political and religious functions. They are symbols of authority, tradition, and culture in Igboland. Title taking in Igboland is a recognition of an acquired or inherited wealth and/or exemplary moral life. Ndi Osu therefore are not allowed to take a title in Igboland. This severely limits their political involvement in the communities. No matter what amount of wealth or achievements an Osu may have earned, he is barred from taking titles. An Osu cannot be crowned a king. Igbos would prefer a mediocre man to rule them than to have a talented Osu rule over them.

This segregation and discrimination applies in religious matters as well. For instance, an Osu is not allowed to perform libations or lead in prayer on behalf of the Diala. Kola nut, according to Uchem, is “one of the most sacred and sacramentally significant ritual in Igbo culture.... It is presented to visitors as a symbol of welcome, hospitality friendship and peace.”<sup>175</sup> In family meetings and community social functions, kola nut must first be presented, blessed, broken, and shared as a sign of true communion among the people and between them and their ancestors. Hence, kola nuts are first thrown out to the ancestors before humans can consume their own. Kola nut is also used for oath taking, sealing of covenants, and other treaties in Igboland. Among ndi Igbo, enemies do not share the kola nut until reconciliation takes place. Participation in this rich religious ritual is denied to ndi Osu. An Osu is not allowed to break kola nut at meetings in which a Diala is present. He can neither present nor be presented with the kola nut in community gathering, because he is considered an unworthy person.<sup>176</sup> To deny an Igbo man the right to break

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<sup>175</sup> Uchem, *Overcoming Women's Subordination*, 60.

<sup>176</sup> Chinyere J. Anidobe and Uche Joy Uzoalor, “Kolanut: Kolanut as an Embodiment for Completeness of the Igbo Culture,” *The Nigerian Academic Forum* 19.2 (2010), 2, accessed on January 4, 2018 <http://www.globalacademicgroup.com/journals/the%20nigerian%20academic%20forum/KOLA%20NUT.pdf>

kola nut amounts to denying him everything that makes him a man, yet this is the daily experience of ndi Osu in Igboland. In many parishes in Igboland, an Osu cannot be the parish council chairman. As has been demonstrated above, in the contemporary Igbo society, ndi Osu suffer enormous discrimination in all areas of life.

*4.2.2 Women's Subordination in Igbo Culture:* When one evaluates literary works on Igbo women, what immediately becomes apparent is the varied and conflicting depiction of Igbo womanhood. First, there are scholars who hold a more positive, complementary, and egalitarian view of Igbo women. This view is built on the principle of balance and complementarity between the feminine and masculine principles found in traditional Igbo culture in precolonial times that I mentioned in the first section of this chapter. In this perspective, the Igbo woman is portrayed as a noble and dignified person. Although different in biological sex, she is perceived as equal in dignity with the man. Joseph T. Agbasiere is one of the major proponents of this view. Agbasiere depicts the Igbo woman as a prestigious being, a gift to society, an ethical being who confers some status on the man, one who is an upholder of morality.<sup>177</sup> Writing from the same perspective, Nneka Okafor and Felix Murove claim that the Igbo society sees the goodness of the woman and knows she is equal in all respects to the man.<sup>178</sup>

More plentiful, however, are studies that present a less than positive portrait of Igbo women.<sup>179</sup> Igbo women are described as oppressed, subjugated, unprivileged persons who are subordinate to men. Some scholars<sup>180</sup> have attributed this negative societal portrait of Igbo women

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<sup>177</sup> Agbasiere, *Women in Igbo Thought and Life*, 7-8.

<sup>178</sup> Nneka Ifeoma Okafor and Felix Munyaradzi Murove, "in *Gendering African Social Spaces: Women, Power, and Cultural Expressions*, (ed. Toyin Falola and Wanjala Nasongo; Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2016), 38-39.

<sup>179</sup> Cyprian Ekwensi, *People of the City* (London: Andrew Dakers, 1954). Cyprian Ekwensi, *Jugua Nana* (London: Hutchinson, 1966). Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (London: Heineman Educational Books, 1977). Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1984).

<sup>180</sup> Akachi T. Ezeigbo, *Gender Issues in Nigeria: A Feminine Perspective* (Lagos: Vista Books, 1996).

to the impact of western colonialism and to Christianity. They view these historical powers to be responsible for the pauperization of Igbo women and their dislodgement from their heights of economic and political power in a pre-colonial and pre-Christian era. These scholars seek to demonstrate how western gender-segregated educational and political systems and policies introduced in Nigeria came to favor men and put women at a disadvantage. For instance, the first schools established in Nigeria by the missionaries were mostly boys' schools. Men were educated first and became involved in the colonial politics and public affairs while women were shut out. In this way, structural inequality between the sexes took firm root. I do not agree with these scholars. In my opinion, ambivalence regarding women always existed in Igbo traditional society and it lingers today. This is a culture that seemingly both romanticizes and disdains womanhood.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, written in 1958 and set in the pre-colonial Igbo cultural world captures this reality. The book draws attention to the opposition existing between men and women in the primitive Igbo culture. The Igbo man personified in the figure of Okonkwo is the hallmark of excellence, while women are presented as inferior and as irrational beings. Men dominate and control their wives. Achebe writes, "Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper."<sup>181</sup> Achebe describes what it means for a man to rule his household with a heavy hand: on one occasion, Okonkwo beats his favorite wife Ekwefi mercilessly just for cutting a few Banana leaves to wrap some food.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo was not the only man practicing wife-battery. Uzowulu<sup>182</sup> also beats his wife on a daily basis, even when she was sick or pregnant. On one occasion, he beat his pregnant wife until she miscarried. Wife battery in the then Umuofia community continued. In contemporary Igbo communities, it remains sadly a common phenomenon. In fact, the payment of

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<sup>181</sup> Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 9.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 64-65.

bride's dowry gives the man purchasing power and right of ownership over a woman. This inhuman act has turned many Igbo women into boxing bags, leaving them in the abyss of misery, shattering any hope of marital bliss. Unfortunately, the Nigerian legal system supports wife battery as long as it does not cause grievous bodily harm. Section 55:10 of the Nigerian Penal Code reads: "nothing is an offence which does not amount to the infliction of grievous harm upon a person and which is done by a husband for the purpose of correcting his wife."

As depicted in *Things Fall Apart*, there is no symmetrical husband-wife relationship in traditional Igbo families. For a man to consult his wife before doing a thing is to act womanish. A typical Igbo man would shun this. Consider this excerpt in *Things Fall Apart*:

When Okonkwo brought him (Ikemefuna) home that day, he called his most senior wife and handed him over to her. 'He belongs to the clan,' he told her. 'So look after him.' 'Is he staying long with us?' she asked. 'Do what you are told, woman, Okonkwo thundered and stammered. 'When did you become one of the *ndichie* of Umuofia?' And so Nwoye's mother took Ikemefuna to her hut and asked no more questions.<sup>183</sup>

This is another image of manhood and womanhood portrayed in this renowned novel. The men dominate their wives, shout at them, and resent their views. For many Igbo men like Okonkwo, women should not be involved in decision-making, be it at home or in the larger community. Her role is take orders from her husband and the *Ndichie* (male elders of the clan). Male dominance remains the order of the day in both Igbo traditional and contemporary society. Achebe puts it clearly through Okonkwo: "no matter how prosperous a man may be, if he was unable to rule his women and children, he was not really a man."<sup>184</sup> Control and dominance characterizes one's approach to women as a man.

Paradoxically, woman as portrayed in *Things Fall Apart* stand also as symbols of the most powerful oracles which regulate the affairs of the people. For instance, Ani—a female deity—is

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 10-11.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, 37.

the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. She plays a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity. She is the ultimate judge of morality and conduct.<sup>185</sup> Again, the Oracle of the Hill and Caves (most powerful village shrine) has two powerful women, Chielo and Chika as the priestesses. This raises an important question: why are women who have been derided and disdained in Umuofia the ones who serve as the priestesses of the most powerful oracle of the land? No man, even the most significant, has the courage to challenge the priestesses. They simply obey their command and bow down to them. Even the powerful and fearless Okonkwo, the epitome of the male principle, was himself subservient to the female principle in the event between Chielo and Ezimma (Okonkwo's daughter).<sup>186</sup> Additionally, in Igbo culture, women, the weaker sex are also ironically the refuge for men in time of trouble. Achebe explains the meaning of a common Igbo female name, Nneka (Mother is Supreme), through the mouth of Ezeudu.<sup>187</sup> The name highlights the special importance of mothers in Igbo culture. What we have seen so far are the two conflicting images of womanhood in the primitive Igbo culture prior to the coming of the white-man in Igbo land. She was subordinate and yet powerful; she was both weak and strong.

### **Other Examples of Gender Inequality in the Contemporary Igbo Society**

(1). Male Child Preference/Fixation: The pre-colonial realities of Igbo women that I have described above are not so different from the present day experiences of many Igbo women. Igbo society is a patriarchal society and, as in other patriarchal societies, there are unequal relationships; women are in the subordinate position. Unequal treatment begins the very first day a girl child and a boy child are born into the world. In my home town Ubomiri, the birth of a child is announced

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 70-76.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 94.



by Oro (a kind of joyful ululation). For a boy child, the cry goes four times, while for a girl, the cry goes three times. This is the first cultural expression of gender imbalance, inequality, bias, and discrimination. This unequal Oro cry sets the stage for subsequent treatments of inequality between a boy and a girl.

(2). Discriminatory Gender Roles: Igbo socialization is male initiated. Despite the strong impact of western civilization in Igbo territories, a more traditional Igbo socialization prevails. At home, male children are trained to be boss, and they enjoy lots of freedom, while female children are formed to be docile, reserved, subservient, and preoccupied with domestic chores. The movements of girls are restricted and monitored. This traditional sex-division of labor in which domestic chores are assigned to women serves to buttress the notion that wives should be submissive to their husbands. What this implies for working class married women is that they have a double function/burden of wage employment and domestic work unaided by their husbands. It is considered the responsibility of the woman to figure out how she will manage her domestic chores such as cooking, house upkeep, and childcare with any other job she has outside the home. Most Igbo men will not assist in domestic chores because they consider these to be female roles.

(3). Gender Exclusion: Social exclusion is a daily reality of Igbo women. Systemic female gender exclusion is manifest in central aspects of Igbo life: the family, labor market, educational sector, politics, and other social service institutions. E. I. Ajakor and N. E. Alutulu note:

Women are excluded from some central activities crucial to humanity such as the defining activities of modern political identity, which men appeared to be granted by natural fiat. These included the right to take an active role in politics, government and leadership. The right to political representation, the right to education, the right to self-definition, the right to legal ownership and the right to bequeath an inheritance.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> E. I. Ajakor and N. E. Alutulu, "Reconstructing the Nigerian mentality on gender for sustainable development," in *The Humanities & Sustainable Development* (ed. A. Chiegboka, T. Uto-Ezeajugh, and M. Ogene; Nimo: Rex Charles & Patrick Ltd, 2011), 976, quoted in A. E. Agbogu and Dr. Ben Igbokwe, "Gender Profiling in Nigeria: The Case of the Igbos of Southeastern Nigeria," *International Journal of African Society Cultures and*

Among the many ways that women are socially excluded, denial of the right of inheritance and the right to own certain properties are of real significance, because these stand as strong examples of social injustice against women in Igboland. In Igbo customary law, the right of succession is by primogeniture. This means that succession is through the eldest male in the family.<sup>189</sup> The eldest son of a deceased man acquires the exclusive rights of inheritance of his property and assumes his family responsibilities.

Under this custom, women (wife and daughter) do not have any right of inheritance.<sup>190</sup> If the deceased has no male child, then his father, brother, or his eldest paternal male relation inherits his property. Under this same law, property acquired by a woman after marriage goes to her husband at her death. Igbo customary laws of succession, according to Omonubi-McDonnell Morolake, “epitomize the inequality, intense prejudice, and suffering which women face in Nigeria. They depict forces of subordination (customary laws and dictates) and calculated efforts to restrict the economic independence of women in a patriarchal order.” An eviction of widows from their late husband’s houses by the man’s male relative is a common phenomenon in Igboland which compounds the sorrow and ordeal of widows without male children. Ironically, most men in Igboland do not own substantial property, such as houses prior to marriage. In other words, the acquisition of major family properties is the joint effort of wife and husband, yet she is deprived of the right to own what she might have labored substantially to acquire.

(4). Destructive Cultural Practices: The perennial marginalization of the female gender can be found in two dominant practices: widowhood, and female circumcision. In the mind of some Igbos,

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*Traditions* 2.2 (2015), 2 accessed January 7, 2018 <http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Gender-Profiling-In-Nigeria-The-Case-of-the-Igbos-of-Southeastern-Nigeria..pdf>

<sup>189</sup> Omonubi-McDonnell Morolake, *Gender Inequality in Nigeria* (Owerri: Spectrum Books, 2003), 132.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 133.

there is always a human suspect when a man dies, and in many cases the wife is the primary suspect, especially if the death were sudden as in cases of cardiac arrest. In the past, when a woman was held a suspect, she could be forced to drink the water used in bathing the corpse of the deceased husband as proof of her innocence. Fortunately, this practice is no longer common today. However, other dehumanizing mourning rites such as compulsory shaving of hair, sitting and sleeping on the bare floor, wearing a particular cloth (black/white), crying at certain intervals, restricted movement throughout the mourning period as a mark of respect for the deceased husband still exist. Those who supervise these rituals are Catholic women. These mourning rites are discriminatory in that they target only women; men are not subjected to the same treatment.

Lastly, in Igboland, children (boys and girls) are circumcised on the eighth day. I do not know the origin of this practice. My interest in it lies in the reasons behind the practice of specifically female circumcision and the impact of this genital mutilation on a girl in her adult life. One of the frivolous reasons given for the practice of female circumcision is that it curbs female promiscuity. This operation results most often in the permanent weakening and numbing of the clitoris, thereby denying the woman sexual pleasure. This horrendous custom is one of the ways that Igbo men control female bodies.

What I have shared in this section are unjust, unequal treatments and traumatic practices of domestic violence which many Igbo women have endured for years. Unfortunately, some of these issues go underreported by women because of the Igbo culture of shame and honor. Worse still, some of the anti-women cultural practices are perceived by women as well as men as simply the Omenala (tradition). Consequently, they get judged to be normal even by educated women.

#### **4.3 Osu Caste Practices and Gender Discrimination among Christians in Igboland: A Challenge to Paul's Ethics of Reconciliation**

The Osu caste system and female gender subordination in Igbo patriarchal culture are practices that are deeply rooted in the complex socio-cultural and religious systems of pre- and post-colonial Igbo society, which serve to foster class and social inequalities. Beyond inequality, these practices have perpetuated acrimony, hostility, antagonism, oppression, stigmatization, conflict, and discrimination in the relationships of Igbo people. These systems of structural injustice instituted by the Igbo pagan ancestors and maintained by their Christian progenitors are incompatible with the central message of Christianity which Paul proclaims in his theology of reconciliation. The Osu caste system for instance, has caused much inter-communal discord between the Osu and Diala culminating in the loss of human lives and properties. It is a system that has bred and nurtured enmity, division, hate, and all forms of hostilities among ndi Igbo. This cultural practice has impeded just and peaceful interpersonal relationships between Osu and Diala. The irony is that most Osu and Diala today are Christians. Many of them are Catholics who worship together in the same parish and share the same Eucharist. They meet together in the parish's pious associations like the Bible Society, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Legion of Mary, Sacred Heart of Jesus Society, etc., to pray and reflect on the word of God. Yet the great gulf between these people in the village square, village market, village school, village stream, and the village farm is like the gulf between heaven and hell.

The Osu caste system is an institutional structure that marginalizes and excludes people on account of their family of origin. This poses a serious challenge to Paul's inclusive theology which is founded on the common humanity of all God's people (Rom 8: 14-17). All human beings (Osu and Diala) are created in the image and likeness of God and are redeemed, and justified by the

self-giving sacrifice of Christ (Rom 5:1-11). This, for Paul, is the basis of a most fundamental equality of all believers. It is against the principles of Christianity for Igbo Christians to discriminate against other baptized Christians because they were born into families tagged Osu by pagan tradition. Theresa Okure notes that “the most insidious aspects of this discrimination against the Osu is that physically and visibly the Osu are not different from the Diala who discriminate against them.”<sup>191</sup> This practice is unlike the apartheid system, where the Blacks are outwardly distinguished from their White oppressor by their color. This practice occurs among people who are of the same heritage and the same skin pigmentation. The segregation and discrimination which has characterized the contemporary Osu caste system in Igboland runs contrary to the eternal plan of God to reconcile and unify all humanity in Christ through the Spirit—a mission which Christ entrusts to the Church.

Reconciliation, peace, and justice are closely related terms in Paul’s theology. There will be no genuine peace and reconciliation without justice. The practice of the Osu caste system is a systemic injustice against a minority among ndi Igbo. It is a violation of the basic human rights of those tagged Osu. It is a violation of Article 1 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (1946) which states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood.” And the Osu caste system is also a violation of Chapter IV, Section 34 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) which states that “no person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment.”

The Osu caste system supposedly was abolished with the passage of the Osu System bill and the Laws of Eastern Nigeria in 1956. The law declared Osu caste practice unlawful and a crime

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<sup>191</sup> Jerome Okafor, *The Challenge of Osu Caste System*, X-XI.

punishable by law. However, as this study indicates, more than 60 years after the enactment of the law, the practice has not stopped and no one has been prosecuted. Though the consecration of new Osu has stopped, the discrimination, oppression, stereotyping, and injustice against Osu still persists. The violation of these international and national laws by Igbos, especially Christians, through Osu caste practices run contrary to Paul's ethic of justice and reconciliation. Christ's believers ought to be law abiding (Rom 13:1-7).

Throughout the Letter to the Romans, but particularly in chapters 12-15, Paul was primarily concerned not only with the relationship between peoples in God's salvific plan but also with healthy and just relationships within the Christian communities, hence his exhortations to love, peace, unity, accommodation, solidarity, etc. The reality of the Osu caste system among Christians in Igboland is incompatible with Paul's principles of love, mutuality, accommodation, and inclusiveness, etc., because it is a system that endorses human hatred and division, superiority and domination by Diala, and the discrimination of other human beings (Osu). It impedes relationships of love and care for the other. It is a system that promotes ethnic and social barriers. In fact, it will not be wrong to question the faith and the witness of Christians in Igboland in the light of the Osu caste system. The persistence of the Osu caste system a hundred years after the Christian faith was planted in Igbo soil raises fundamental questions regarding the impact of Christian message in Igboland.

Much of what I have stated about the incompatibility of the Osu caste system with the Pauline ethic of reconciliation can be applied to female gender subordination in Igboland as well. Like the Osu caste system, women in Igboland are groaning under the weight of oppressive socio-cultural systems that dehumanize them. As Taiwo Afisi rightly said, "the misery of our society

today has its genesis from oppression, inequality, and discrimination against women.”<sup>192</sup> The discrimination of women in every society is a major evil that has caused untold problems in our world. The culture of male superiority and dominance is contrary to Pauline ethics of equity (2 Cor 8:13-14; Col 4:1) and mutual love (Rom 14). Igbo cultural practices which distort and dehumanize female bodies stand in stark opposition to Paul’s theology of the human body as the temple of the Holy Spirit where a living sacrifice to God is offered. Male domination is an evil which the Christian faith calls believers to reject and oppose. It is evil because it imposes an ideology that divides persons and categorizes them into superior and inferior, important and less so, valuable and useless, etc. Afisi cautions that “our society must not lose sight of the fact that cooperation between man and woman, interdependence on one another is quintessentially fundamental to achieving a well-ordered society.”<sup>193</sup>

#### **4.4 Implications of Paul’s Theology of Reconciliation in Igbo Communities**

As pointed out in the previous chapters, complex realities shaped Paul’s understanding of reconciliation. Among these realities was his understanding of the Christ event, an event through which God abolished the enmity between God and humans (vertical), the enmity among humans themselves (horizontal), and the hostility between humans and the entire creation (cosmic). In this way, God established a new paradigm of relationship in the world—a relationship of forgiveness, peace, love, justice, and unity. Paul’s theology of God’s reconciling love in Christ and through the Spirit must have more serious implications for the everyday lives of the believing community.

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<sup>192</sup> Taiwo Afisi, “Power and Womanhood in Africa: An Introductory Evaluation,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 3.6 (2010), 237, accessed 10, January 2018.  
<http://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol3no6/3.5PowerandWomanhood.pdf>

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 237.

There is an invitation here for Christians to model God's own reconciliatory action in their own communities. For Igbo Christian communities, this means overcoming longstanding hostilities between the Osu and Diala, and the unhealthy and unjust relationships between men and women. Igbo Christian communities are to model themselves after the example of Jesus Christ by becoming reliable agents of reconciliation through the power of the Spirit, fostering a culture of reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace in Igboland. This is a lifelong task that will serve to define the Church in Igboland in contemporary times. Paul's theology of reconciliation is an invitation for Igbo Christians to embody the obedience and self-giving love of Jesus the Messiah. Through his faithful and obedient death on the cross, Christ broke down the wall of hostility that separated humanity and nullified laws and traditions that sanction hostility and enmity among people (Eph 2:14-18). For Paul, God's reconciling action in Christ calls for a faith response that will be demonstrated in appropriate actions on the part of his audience, a response that will transform the social relationships of believers.

Paul interprets the events of Christ and the Spirit as cosmic, apocalyptic events which mark the inauguration of a new age, an age when God is renewing and transforming humans and their relationships with others through the power of the Spirit. Those who are in Christ Jesus live within this new age. A notable feature of this new age, according to Paul, is that believers no longer perceive others from the perspective of class, race, and gender categories. Any human sense of superiority and inferiority based in the old age is rendered null and void in the new age through baptism in Christ. The implication of such a theology for the Igbo communities can no longer be literary. If the old pagan Igbo society was characterized by numerous unequal power relationships, the new Igbo Christian society should be the very opposite. Overcoming perennial social division



and domination becomes the vision and mission of the new communities which God forms through the Spirit in Igboland.

Within Paul's theology of reconciliation, peace, and a sense of being a new creation are the very principles that must be reflected in social and communal relations. Paul's theology of reconciliation is essentially a theology of liberation which has its root in God's intervention in the oppression and exploitation of the people of Israel in Egypt. The climax of this divine liberative action is the liberation of humanity from the powers of sin, and their reconciliation with God and with one another (Rom 5:1-11). This mission which God began in Christ is still on-going and all Christ's believers are called to active mission with respect to it (2 Cor 5: 18-21). For Igbo Christian communities, this will mean identifying and naming the Osu caste system and gender subordination to be structures of oppression, injustice, and domination, and working towards their elimination. It also means replacing these communal ways with just structures that will guarantee the dignity of all people whether Diala, Osu, man or woman.

Finally, Paul's exhortation to the "strong" regarding their treatment of the "weak" in Rom 14:1-15:6 is of great significance in the Igbo context. The Diala are the "strong" who oppress and despise the Osu— the "weak"— just as the men who are the strong and powerful oppress and dominate the women—the perceived weak and powerless. Paul admonishes believers against taking on arrogant and superior attitudes based on their different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. According to Constantineau, "to judge, or despise one another, or to be a stumbling block for others are practices of exclusion which Paul describes as sinful because they destroy the relationship between members of the community, which is the body of Christ."<sup>194</sup> Igbo Christian

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<sup>194</sup> Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 173.

communities are called to an ethic of love and care for the other. Oppression of the socially weak and the poor, or indifference to their plights, is social sin, something that attracts God's anger on a people (Amos 2:6-7; Lk 11:42).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have tried to articulate the meaning and implications of Paul's theology of reconciliation for the Igbo Christian communities in the concrete cultural realities of the discriminatory Osu caste system and gender subordination. The study identifies these two cultural practices as major sources of division and conflict among ndi Igbo, and offers a moral evaluation of these cultural practices in the light of Paul's ethics of reconciliation. The Osu caste system and women's subordination are examples of structural injustice, and they are incompatible with Paul's theology of reconciliation. The story of God's reconciling love in Christ through the Spirit must carry serious spiritual and social implications for Christ's believers: it invites us to right relationship with God, but also to right relationships in communal relationships with one another. Paul reminds us that as Christians living in the new age inaugurated by Christ through the Spirit, we have been empowered to transform the unjust socio-cultural structures of our time. Inequality and subordination based on race, class, and gender must be subverted in the communities of Christ's believers. Paul's inclusive theology is a vision worth promoting with all one's might. It has the potential to inspire the transformation and redemption of human relationships.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusion

One of the foundational stories of the Christian Bible is that human beings too often exist in enmity and alienation, and that this has been the case throughout the history of humanity. God continually seeks to overcome this enmity. The climax of God's reconciling project is seen in the death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus. Paul discusses God's reconciling love in Rom 5:1-11 using the Greek καταλλάσσω-καταλλαγή word group. As this study has shown, the theology of reconciliation in Rom 5:1-11 has an inextricable *vertical/horizontal* component. The καταλλάσσω-καταλλαγή terminology in its original Greco-Roman socio-cultural context points to transformed human relationships at a socio-political level in which enmity and hostility are replaced with love and peace. While maintaining continuity with a traditional understanding of reconciliation, Paul creatively adapts the concept and makes a significant theological use of it. From his perspective, Paul speaks about reconciliation as the gracious way that God has overcome human hostility and reconciled humanity with Godself through the Christ-event, a divine activity that is still on-going through the power of the divine Spirit (Rom 8). The events of Christ and the Spirit fulfil God's eternal plan to reconcile the entire creation to Godself, thus redeeming and restoring the disrupted divine-human relationship caused by original sin (Gen 3:16).

God's reconciliation with humanity (Rom 5:10-11), for Paul, implies the reconciliation of unhealthy human relationships between people (Eph 2:16), and cosmic reconciliation (Col 1:20) as well. Throughout the Letter to the Romans, Paul shows that the story of God's reconciling love in Christ has serious implications for the everyday lives of Christ's believers. Believers are to

embody God's gracious act of reconciliation within and outside their communities. By virtue of their baptism in Christ (Rom 6-8), believers are incorporated into the story of the Messiah Jesus and are called to active participation in the same self-giving and reconciling love of God which is ultimately revealed in the death of Christ. Through participation in the Christ event through baptism, the faithful enter a new realm of existence in which they are empowered to live the new life inaugurated by Christ through his faithful obedience. They receive divine help to live righteously and obediently to God. For Paul, baptism not only incorporates believers in the narrative of God's reconciling love, but also posits the bedrock of unity and equality of all Christ's members (2 Cor 13:13; Rom 12:4-5). The rhetoric of reconciliation continues in Rom 9-11 where Paul demonstrates that it is in the Christ event that God finally realizes God's longstanding plan to bring together all peoples (Jews and Gentiles) into the one family of God 'in Christ' as a fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham. This divine expansive vision of inclusivity is what Paul illustrates using the imagery of the olive tree.

For Paul, what God has done for believers through Christ calls for faith-filled response that is demonstrated in appropriate actions on the part of his audience, a response that can transform the life of Christian communities. The paraenesis in Rom 12-15 are illustrative of what this response should be. The reality of the believers' reconciliation with God becomes the basis for persons to live out a reconciled life with others. The praxis of reconciliation to which Paul points Christian communities includes: genuine love for one another, living the Christian culture of hospitality, the pursuit of peace and unity, compassion for the weak, nonjudgmental attitude, communal prayer, etc. Paul's own praxis in Rom 16 sums up his inclusive and reconciliatory theology. Paul shows that men and women are equally called to serve the Church. In the new community of God's people which God forms through the Spirit, no one is to be subordinated or

marginalized on the basis of gender, class or race. The ecclesiology of Rom 16 confirms a major argument of the thesis—the purpose of God’s reconciling work through the Messiah, which is the creation of a new covenant people of God, is an egalitarian community that includes both Jews and Gentiles, male and female who are called to a discipleship of equals through the divine Spirit.

I strongly believe that a primary task of biblical scholars today is to reconstruct life in the ancient Christian communities for the purpose of understanding biblical texts and to suggest how the living word of God is relevant for contemporary Christian communities. Consequently, this thesis explores the relevance of a Pauline theology of reconciliation for the Igbo Christian communities in the concrete socio-cultural realities of Osu caste system and gender subordination. It is the assumption of this thesis that embracing Paul’s theology of reconciliation can serve as a strong basis for tackling socio-cultural practices of hatred, division, inequality, and injustice within the Igbo Christian communities. For Paul, the theology of reconciliation invites us not only to ameliorate our relationship with God, but also to embody the reconciling love of God in our everyday relationships with one another. In this project of reconciliation, the Church in Igboland needs to assume greater responsibility because the transforming ministry of reconciliation has been entrusted to her (2 Cor 5:19-20).

## **5:2 Recommendations**

This thesis concludes with the following recommendations:

**Changing the Pattern of Faith Formation:** Osu caste system and women subordination in my opinion are the two unaddressed elements within Christian communities in Igboland. The Church needs to direct missionary energy here. One of the ways that the Church might engage these problems is through the faith formation of Christians. The dominant catechetical instructions

which most Catholics receive in faith formation come from the Penny Catechism. Unfortunately, this catechism book that provides answers to basic questions about Catholic faith and doctrines do not address the Igbo socio-cultural practices which militate against the gospel of Christ. Neither the Osu caste issue nor gender discrimination is taken up in catechism classes. There is an urgent need to design a new catechetical program like the “Shared Christian Praxis,” proposed by Thomas Groome which promotes critical reflection on both ecclesial and societal realities and practices in the light of the word of God. A faith formation program that would include both sacramental and social reconciliation themes in its curriculum is desperately needed in the Igbo Church. There is also a need to review marriage course programs in Igbo Catholic parishes. The principle of love, respect, and equal partnership in marriage should be emphasized strongly during marriage course.

**Speaking out against Osu Caste System and Women Subordination:** Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* no. 30 affirms that “the Church ... has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, many of whom are her own children the duty of assisting the birth of this liberation, of giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete.” Paul VI recognizes that the Church has the responsibility to proclaim the liberation of the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, etc. In the case of Osu caste system, there seems to be a conspiracy of silence going on among the clergy as this issue is hardly ever addressed from the pulpit. It is not even included diocesan pastoral agendas as a pastoral problem. The question becomes: why the silence? Are the Igbo Catholic clergy, also caught up in the Osu-Diala quagmire? It is time for priests and religious to begin exercising their prophetic role by speaking out against these atrocious cultural practices bearing in mind that “the Church in Africa is called upon to renew, through the Word of God, the people's culture, their values, thought patterns and models of life.”<sup>195</sup> Failure to embrace this task means obstructing

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<sup>195</sup> *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa* (Vatican City, 1993), no. 4.

God's reconciliation, justice, and peace in Igboland. Paul's rhetorical question "how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom 10:4) serves as a reminder to Igbo clergy to proclaim the undiluted reconciling and liberating word of God to the Igbo people.

**Education:** Another way the Church can promote the gospel of social reconciliation (both gender and ethnic) is through her educational system—primarily through the university. The Igbo people live in the bondage of Omenala ideology and stands in need of emancipation. Many Igbo Christians today have a strong attachment to Igbo culture and would prefer to die than to live and see these cultures change. Ideological emancipation can be achieved through proper education and enlightenment concerning the evil of inhuman cultural practices and the need to abandon such practices. Fundamental Christian values like forgiveness, peace and reconciliation, social justice, equality of men and women etc., should be emphasized in Catholic school.

**Prayer:** Paul knew that genuine peace and reconciliation are gifts of God. Consequently, he prays that God will grant the Roman Christian communities the grace to live in harmony with one another (Rom 15:5). Our quest for genuine reconciliation must be accompanied by fervent prayer. Igbo Christian communities need to pray for the grace to dispose themselves to accept the gifts of God's peace and reconciliation. They also need to pray for the empowerment of the divine Spirit to live the principles of their Christian faith. Prayer is the fountain from which believers are to draw the grace and the inner strength to live out their Christian faith. It is only through encounter with God in prayer that positive inner transformation of life can be realized. The prayer that I recommend here is both personal and communal prayers. Prayers for the liquidation of Osu caste system and prayers for overcoming women subordination could be composed and prayed in every Catholic parish in Igboland, just like the prayer against bribery and corruption in Nigeria.

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